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BELIZE:

NEW INTERNATIONAL ACTOR

A THESIS

SUBMITTED ON THE NINETEENTH DAY OF APRIL, 1985

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF

TULANE UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

BY



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Belize, formally British Honduras, is a small country about the size of the state of Massachusetts located on the Caribbean Sea between Mexico and Guatemala. By its geographic location it is very much a part of Central America, yet its culture, history, government and language are all much more closely linked with the island Caribbean countries. Consequently, it has often been excluded in groupings of Central American countries and ranked as a Caribbean country.

Belize was carved out of the Central American mainland by British pirates and loggers. The name "Belize" is in fact believed to be a derivation of the name of a Scotsman, Peter Wallace, who settled in the seventeenth century on the Bay of Honduras in the current area of Belize City.<sup>1</sup> Through the years, Belize developed a very British identity and by the early 1800s Britain began to recognize the Bay of Honduras settlement as a colony. Aldous Huxley once visited the colony of British Honduras and in his book, Beyond the Mexique Bay, he stated: "If the world had any ends, British Honduras would surely be one of them."<sup>2</sup> Huxley had visited Belize a short time after a hurricane had left much of Belize City in ruins. This sight along with Belize's ever





present mosquitoes and uniformly hot and humid climate undoubtedly led to Huxley's analysis. Admittedly, Belize is an obscure little country that has seldom occupied the forefront of world attention. Consequently, few people outside of Central American and Caribbean scholars or inhabitants are even likely to know where Belize is located. Despite Belize's obscurity, it was able to gain the attention of the international community during the 1960s and 1970s and to marshal its overwhelming support for Belize's independence struggle.

In 1950, a nationalist movement arose within Belize in the guise of the People's United Party (PUP). This party was led by a man who is recognized today as the Father of Belize, George Price. Mr. Price and his PUP assumed the leadership of the Belizean government in the 1950s and maintained it up until the most recent Belizean elections in December 1984. During the PUP's tenure, it set out to turn the British colony of British Honduras into the independent nation of Belize. The fight against colonialism and for independence was in fact the PUP's paramount objective. Britain was not altogether unwilling to allow independence, but Guatemala retained an unresolved territorial claim to Belizean territory that dated back to the days of Spanish colonialism in the fifteenth century. In retaining its claim, Guatemala had also made periodic military threats to recoup the Belizean territory, and as a result Britain was unwilling to release a colony that was likely to be invaded upon a British withdrawal. On the other hand, Britain was



also initially unwilling to grant Belize an independence that would require a continuing umbrella of British protection. Despite its initial unwillingness, Britain did grant Belize its independence with a defense guarantee on 21 September 1981. British troops that protected the colony of Belize remained to protect the independent nation of Belize. Britain finally granted a threatened Belize its independence with a reluctant defense guarantee because of the influence of the international community.

Belize under the leadership of George Price and his PUP began a concerted diplomatic initiative in the early 1960s to win international support for Belize's rights of self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity--in short its right to independence. Belize faced a very difficult task because virtually all of its neighbors, including the United States leaned towards supporting the Guatemalan position in the age-old Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. Despite this and with very limited diplomatic resources, Belize began a diplomatic appeal using the platforms of international organizations in order to present its case. Belize achieved remarkable success. Although the dispute with Guatemala remains unresolved, an ostracized Guatemala stands virtually alone today in its anachronistic territorial claim while an independent Belize is reaping the benefits of the stature, prestige and relationships which it acquired through its active participation in international forums. This paper will provide a brief historical trace of Belize's colonial beginnings and the development of its



independence movement, but it will focus primarily on the PUP Government's effective use of international organizations to achieve its objective of independence. In reviewing Belize's diplomatic initiative it becomes obvious that Belize has undoubtedly become a new international actor.





## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY

#### Anglo-Guatemalan Dispute

##### Guatemalan Claims

Guatemala's claim to the territory of Belize dates back to the days of Spanish colonialism in the fifteenth century. Spanish conquistadors had laid claim to much of the New World, so much so that in 1493, Pope Alexander VI, by his perceived divine right of Papal donation, gave Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain all of what is recognized today as Central America and much of North and South America. A year later, Spain signed a treaty with Portugal to recognize Portugese territories in the New World and to confirm the Papal donation to Spain. Spanish conquistadors continued to explore their "God given" territory and by 1527, a governor had been appointed to administer the area of the Yucatan peninsula, which included the current land area of Belize. The governor apparently determined that the area of today's Belize was unsuitable for habitation because no Spanish settlements were ever created there.<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, the Spanish Central American territories were subdivided by the Vice-Royalty of New Spain into provinces. Guatemala was one of these provinces and it originally included much of today's Belize. Guatemala City at



one time was the seat of the colonial government that controlled five provinces. These five provinces, which also became known as the Kingdom of Guatemala included Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

As the winds of independence began to stir among the Spanish colonies in the early nineteenth century, they did not escape Central America. In September 1821, the old Spanish provinces declared themselves independent and united as a Central American Federation of States. An 1823 declaration stated that the federation was comprised of all of the states formerly constituting the Kingdom of Guatemala and that the new states were to take the boundaries of the original Spanish provinces.<sup>2</sup>

This Federation of States or Central American Republic as it became known, was a very short lived union. Each of the individual states declared their own independence separately from Spain. Guatemala did so in 1823 and at the time it clearly defined its borders as those of the original Spanish province. It did this, even though the area of Belize had never been settled by either Spaniards or Guatemalans and in spite of the presence of a British settlement. Guatemala's claim to the territory rested in what it saw as its legitimate rights of inheritance as a successor state to Spain.<sup>3</sup>

The British presence in what Guatemala saw as its sovereign territory posed a real problem for Guatemala, especially when Britain began moves toward colonization of its settlement in the Bay of Honduras area within a year



after Guatemala's independence. A number of agreements and treaties between Spain and Great Britain had served to legitimize a British presence in the area for the purpose of extracting lumber.<sup>4</sup> However, a number of other agreements and treaties prior to Guatemalan independence seemed to indicate that Britain had no early intent to create an expansion of its empire in Central America.<sup>5</sup> It has in fact been argued that it was only after Guatemala declared independence that the British subjects within the territory became concerned about Guatemala's claims to their lands and sought British sovereignty.

After the colonists' request Britain did slowly begin to establish its sovereignty but, in the meantime, Guatemala's and Great Britain's diplomatic relations remained cordial enough to meet for negotiations to resolve their territorial dispute. In 1859, they did conclude a treaty. Unfortunately, an article of this treaty was never fully implemented and the two countries disagree to this day as to its other provisions. Britain believes it concluded a boundary agreement that firmly established Belize. Guatemala believes that it ceded territory to Britain for certain concessions that were never received. The arguments of both sides concerning this treaty are crucial to an understanding of the present territorial dispute. A closer look at the 1859 treaty will follow a brief look at the historical British territorial claims.





### British Claims

Early in the seventeenth century, it was believed that English settlers first appeared on the Central American coast near the Bay of Honduras.<sup>6</sup> They were a combination of loggers and buccaneers. The buccaneers probably arrived first because they found the coastal islands and hidden coves and bays a convenient place to hide before and after pirating Spanish galleons returning to Spain with their New World riches.<sup>7</sup> The first British settlement is usually attributed to the year 1638 in the area of modern Belize City.<sup>8</sup> A number of treaties and diplomatic agreements between Britain and Spain regarding their Central American territories took place during the following one hundred and fifty years. In 1783, as part of the settlement of the Versailles Treaty, Spain did grant territorial logging rights to Britain in the Bay of Honduras area.<sup>9</sup> This territory was later expanded in another agreement three years later.<sup>10</sup>

Britain's interest in the area was probably only for its riches of logwood and mahogany, rather than any real desire to develop an expansion of the British Empire.<sup>11</sup> In fact, legislation of the British Parliament in 1817 and 1819 relating to British territories did not include the area of Belize.<sup>12</sup>

It was argued that it was not until the nineteenth century gave birth to the independence movement in Latin America that there was a "change in the attitude of the British Foreign Office towards the British settlement in



the Bay of Honduras."<sup>13</sup> Largely through internal requests from British subjects in the territory did the British government even try to negotiate a settlement to firmly establish British sovereignty over the area.<sup>14</sup> This plea from the settlement stemmed from Guatemala's claim that the entire area of Central America was a part of the new Central American States. The boundaries of these new states were to be those of the provinces created by the Vice-Royalty of New Spain back in the days of the early Spanish colonialism following the Pope's gift.<sup>15</sup> England and other European countries, however, had never acknowledged the Pope's donation as legitimate. Queen Elizabeth I was remembered referring to the gift as "imaginary propriety."<sup>16</sup> She further indicated that it would not "hinder other princes from trading in those countries, or from transporting colonies into those parts thereof where the Spaniards do not inhabit."<sup>17</sup> Consequently, in the 1820s when the nation of Guatemala was first created and determined its borders to include the British territory, the British thought it absurd. Since neither Spanish nor Guatemalan settlers had ever settled in the Belizean territory, British settlers believed their claims to the area more legitimate, and the British government slowly began to back them up by establishing legal sovereignty over the territory.

In 1825, the British government acknowledged and established the sovereign rights of the settlers in the Bay of Honduras. In 1840, British laws were made applicable to the territory, and by 1862, the colony of British Honduras



was born.<sup>18</sup> Originally, British Honduras was established as a part of Jamaica. In 1871, it was afforded Crown Colony status with its own lieutenant governor, but, he was subservient to Jamaica's governor. In 1884, British Honduras achieved full Crown Colony status with its own governor.<sup>19</sup>

#### Anglo-Guatemalan Treaty of 1859

Around the same time that Guatemalan independence occurred and British governmental interest picked up, the United States was also getting involved. In 1823, the United States espoused the Monroe Doctrine which claimed all of the hemisphere as an area of U. S. interest. It also forbade all European expansion in the hemisphere. The isthmus canal was also under construction in nearby Panama and the United States did not want any European encroachment.<sup>20</sup>

The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 19 April 1850, between the United States and Britain, was a treaty where both countries reneged their rights towards involvement in Latin American states.<sup>21</sup> It was largely negotiated to acknowledge the Monroe Doctrine. Britain however, did not interpret the treaty to require its withdrawal of the Belizean territory, but rather a prohibition of any further expansion.<sup>22</sup> Many United States congressmen, however, upon passing the treaty, interpreted it otherwise and were outraged at the continuance of British occupation of Guatemala, but, more importantly, they claimed, "any assertion of British sovereignty over Belize as an infringement of the Monroe Doctrine."<sup>23</sup>





The debate went on until six years later when a new treaty, the Dallas-Clarendon Treaty, between the United States and Britain resolved that the earlier Clayton-Bulwer Treaty did not apply to the Bay of Honduras settlement, but, that within two years of the Dallas-Clarendon Treaty, Britain must come to some agreement with Guatemala.<sup>24</sup> Concerted efforts were made towards meeting this treaty requirement and it did result in the negotiations between Guatemala and Britain that led to the Anglo-Guatemalan Treaty of 1859.

This treaty was a relatively short treaty of only eight articles. Most of it dealt with defining territorial borders and establishing relations between the two areas. One of the articles, however, proved to be quite controversial, from shortly after the treaty was negotiated through today. Article seven indicated that both countries would:

. . . mutually agree conjointly to use their best efforts by taking adequate means for establishing the easiest communication (either by means of a cart-road, or employing the rivers, or both united according to the opinion of the surveying engineers), between the fittest place on the Atlantic coast near the settlement of Belize and the capital of Guatemala.<sup>25</sup>

Britain conducted numerous land surveys in preparation for complying with the requirements of article seven but upon their completion it determined that the cost estimates made the building of such a road prohibitive.<sup>26</sup>

A convention was held in 1863 to reach agreement as to how article seven could be resolved. Britain offered several proposals, such as sharing the building cost of the road and simply paying Guatemala fifty thousand pounds.<sup>27</sup>



Shortly after the convention met, Guatemala became involved in a border war with El Salvador and it never officially acted on the British proposals.<sup>28</sup> By 1867, Britain announced that it felt the matter was resolved; that by Guatemala's failure to act or respond to the convention proposals, Britain was not obligated to fulfill article seven.<sup>29</sup> Guatemala in turn retorted that the entire treaty was thus null and void.<sup>30</sup> Britain did not see it that way. It felt that the treaty was a boundary agreement that established definite boundaries between two sovereign territories, and, that article seven was simply a mutual agreement in addition to that.<sup>31</sup> Guatemala, on the other hand, believed that the building of the road was compensatory for its cession of territory to Britain, and since the road was never built, the territory remained Guatemalan land.<sup>32</sup>

The language of the 1859 treaty definitely seemed to favor British interpretation.<sup>33</sup> The treaty begins: "Whereas the boundary . . . has not yet been ascertained and marked out."<sup>34</sup> Guatemala cannot deny this but its view has been that the treaty was written and described as a boundary agreement only in order to not seem to infringe the provisions of the 1850 Clayton-Bulwer Treaty which specifically prohibited further acquisition or control of territory in Central America by either the United States or Britain.<sup>35</sup> Regardless, the Guatemalan and British interpretations of the treaty remain divided and the territorial dispute continues today.



### Post Treaty of 1859 Relations

On 28 December 1920, Britain proposed to Guatemala that they begin land surveys to establish boundary demarcations. Guatemala was slow in responding but on 3 January 1929, it gave its consent. In the meantime, a 1928 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation was signed between Guatemala and Great Britain concerning Guatemalan-British Honduran relations. During these treaty negotiations there was never any mention of the 1859 Treaty or the infamous article seven.<sup>36</sup>

Britain began its survey work in May 1829 and by August 1831 notes had been exchanged which indicated agreement on the boundary demarcations that had been completed thus far. In June 1832, Britain began additional survey work and by February 1933, they were prepared to have Guatemala confirm their results. On 4 March 1933, Guatemala reintroduced the question of article seven of the 1859 treaty. It did however send its own engineers "to corroborate with the British engineers in the survey for boundary demarcation."<sup>37</sup> Although no official agreement of these boundary demarcations was reached, Guatemala continued to participate until the operations were completed on 20 June 1934.<sup>38</sup>

It has been argued by some that Guatemala's renewed claim to Belize in 1933 was prompted by the prospect of oil discoveries.<sup>39</sup> Several major oil companies were interested in explorations in the area, and they have in fact since drilled exploratory wells, but, nothing of fruition has ever come of their search.



British feelings seemed to view Guatemala's close cooperation during the boundary surveys of the early 1930s as de facto recognition of the earlier 1859 treaty. Guatemalan feelings, however, seemed to indicate that the boundary demarcation cooperation was conducted without Guatemala formally agreeing to anything. Their participation had always been conditional upon "the compensatory stipulations of article seven of the 1859 treaty."<sup>40</sup>

The renewed Guatemalan claim in 1933 began a decade of intense efforts towards resolving the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. In late 1936, Guatemala offered Britain specific proposals which included returning land to Guatemala. They were vehemently rejected by Britain. In 1937, Guatemala proposed that the United States arbitrate the dispute. Britain refused to allow this and the United States was not interested anyway. In 1938, after many years of research, the Guatemalan Ministry for Foreign Affairs published five thousand Spanish and one thousand English copies of what became known as the White Book. It was a scholarly and lengthy volume that was distributed internationally to expound the historical and legal Guatemalan claims to Belize. It clearly gained Guatemala much support, especially from its Latin American neighbors. Through 1943, various additions were added to the original White Book which included additional research and opinions from numerous Latin American countries supporting Guatemala's claims.

During the years of World War II, Guatemala rested its direct efforts with Britain to resolve the dispute, but the





White Book campaign was quietly building international support for Guatemala's position. Shortly before the end of World War II, on 11 March 1945, a new Guatemalan constitution was written which included Belize as part of Guatemala. It further stated that "steps taken to obtain its recovery were matters of national interest."<sup>41</sup>

Anglo-Guatemalan diplomatic efforts were finally resumed in 1946 and Britain agreed to allow the territorial question to be resolved by a third party--the new International Court of Justice at The Hague.<sup>42</sup> Guatemala originally consented, but the two parties could not agree as to what the court would specifically be asked to decide so nothing was done.

In 1948, rumors spread that Britain was planning to resettle war refugee families in British Honduras. Guatemala's resultant opposition and hostility led it to close its border and to make preparations for a military invasion of the Belizean territory.<sup>43</sup> In response to this, Britain sent two Navy cruisers and an infantry division to defend the territory. Shortly thereafter, Guatemala asked once again for United States' arbitration to resolve the dispute, but both the United States and Britain were still uninterested. Three years later on 21 May 1951, in a very unexpected move, Guatemala suddenly reopened its border with Belize. An official Guatemalan government announcement attributed this action to the "magnificent relations between the two countries."<sup>44</sup>

During the 1950s, Guatemalan active interest in re-



claiming Belize seemed to be minimal, however this seems to be explained more by the internal unrest and turmoil in Guatemala than by any real decline in Guatemalan interest in recovering Belize.

Negotiations finally began again in 1962 in Puerto Rico. They were bilateral talks between the United Kingdom and Guatemala but Belizean Premier George Price was also present as an observer. These were the first negotiations that included a representative of Belize and Mr. Price took advantage of the opportunity to let it be known that Belize rejected any ideas that would lead to its association with Guatemala. The talks were not productive and within a year Guatemala severed its diplomatic relations with Britain due to what it saw as a British willingness to grant independence and sovereignty to Belize.<sup>45</sup>

In 1965, talks began once again, in Miami, Florida. They continued into 1966 but without any resolution of the dispute. During these talks, however, the British and Guatemalan negotiators agreed to request outside mediation from the United States. This arbitration attempt failed to provide an agreeable settlement. Instead, Guatemala increased the intensity of its rhetoric about acquiring the Belizean territory.<sup>46</sup> For the remainder of the 1960s and into the 1970s, formal negotiations were not attempted.

In 1971, the Belizean government initiated a resumption of diplomatic efforts towards resolving the dispute. They had no sooner begun in early 1972 than they were canceled due to a Guatemalan charge that Britain



was presenting a "threat to the Americas."<sup>47</sup> Britain had, in fact, dispatched large numbers of military forces to Belize to participate in a previously announced exercise. Guatemala had also been building up troop strength in its northern regions near the Belize border--supposedly to mount an offensive against guerilla activities but, allegedly, to carry out an invasion of Belize.<sup>48</sup>

Regardless, Guatemala filed a formal protest with the Organization of American States (OAS) and called for sanctions against the United Kingdom. In response, Jamaica's OAS representative and Belizean Premier George Price lobbied successfully on Belize's behalf such that Guatemala withdrew its request for sanctions due to its impending failure. Jamaica and Belize were able to make it clear that Guatemala presented far more of a threat to Belize than the British troops in Belize presented to Guatemala. During the OAS discussions, the United Kingdom invited an OAS observer to examine the Belize based British forces. The observer reported that the British forces in Belize were of a defensive nature and posed no threat to Guatemala.<sup>49</sup>

During 1975, Guatemala appeared once again to be staging its military for an invasion of Belize. In response, the United Kingdom provided military reinforcements for Belize. Guatemala was clearly the aggressor in this incident and no protests were filed as a result of the British show of strength.

Despite Guatemala's repeated military belligerence in the mid 1970s, it was still willing to reenter negotiations



with the United Kingdom in 1977. These talks were barely underway in Washington, D. C., when once again Guatemala aligned its armed forces along the Belizean border for an apparent invasion. British troops returned once more to supplement a small defensive garrison. This time they remained to act as an in place deterrent against any future Guatemalan aggression.

Through 1977, the negotiation attempts had never met with success because of Guatemala's insistence on territorial cessions and Belize's insistence on maintaining its territorial integrity. In a December 1977 speech at the United Nations, Belizean Premier Price addressed both the issue of Guatemala's territorial claim and its military belligerence. He stated:

They (Guatemala) stated that land cession in the southern part of Belize was essential to Guatemala for political, security and economic reasons and that no settlement was conceivable without territorial cession . . . .

. . . the Guatemalan military machine had prepared for war and was poised to invade Belize, . . . Seeing the imminent danger to our survival as a country, the Belize government requested British reinforcements . . . (that) came in time to save Belize from invasion.<sup>50</sup>

Despite Guatemala's military threats of 1977, the negotiations continued, and Britain even suggested a small cession of Belizean territory in the southern Toledo district.<sup>51</sup> Belizeans were outraged that Britain would even consider a cession of Belizean territory. The international community that had arisen in support of Belize also voiced its rejection of any idea that compromised Belize's territorial integrity. As a result of the apparent willingness by





the United Kingdom to include land cession as a negotiatory bargaining chip, a meeting was held in New York City among representatives of the United Kingdom, the Belizean Government, and the Belizean Opposition. As a result of this meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding was issued on 2 June 1978. The document contained six major points which included an agreement which allowed for the participation by all three of the parties that met for the New York meeting in any future negotiations with Guatemala. The Memorandum also required that any negotiated settlement would be placed before the public in a referendum and, perhaps most importantly, it included the agreement that the Belize issue of independence was distinct and separate from any settlement of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. Until this agreement, Belize's long delayed independence from the United Kingdom had been contingent upon a resolution of the Guatemalan threat. This was no longer to remain an obstacle.<sup>52</sup>

After a change of government in Guatemala in 1978, negotiations reopened. British proposals no longer included land offerings, but they did include some substantial benefits for Guatemala. These included a joint road building program, a maritime right of access for Guatemala's east coast ports and assurances that no foreign troops, other than British, would ever be based in Belize. Guatemala rejected these proposals late in 1978 and maintained its position of requiring the cession of land.<sup>53</sup>

The cumulative negotiating efforts of the 1970s thus left the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute no closer to resolution



than it had ever been. The parties were also not to return to any formal talks until March 1981. These negotiations proved to be very promising. They did in fact contribute greatly towards bringing Belize to independence on 21 September 1981; however, they did not resolve the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. After an examination of the development of the Belizean decolonization and independence movement, this chapter will return to review the 1981 negotiations which contributed to the establishment of Belize's "dependent" independence.

### Independence Movement

The events of World War II spawned the birth of many new and independent countries from former colonial possessions and this trend towards independence did not escape British Honduras.

On the evening of 31 December 1949, a group of men, united in their opposition towards British pressure to join the newly created West Indies Federation, and in their concern for their national economy and the persistent Guatemalan threat, established an organization known as the People's Committee.<sup>54</sup> George Price was one of the creators of this organization and he served as its secretary. The political opinions of the People's Committee became publicized in a local Belizean newspaper through which the group gained much popular support. They were quickly labeled anti-British, however, by the local colonial government.

By 19 September 1950, the People's Committee evolved



into a political party, the People's United Party (PUP). It quickly became involved in a 20 November 1950 local election of the Belize City Council where five of six PUP candidates won seats on the nine member council. This early support was representative of the widespread appeal of the PUP and its political positions. It was also a clear sign to the British colonial government that real change was at hand.

In the meantime, a constitutional review begun by Britain in 1948 for the purpose of ascertaining British Honduras' readiness for constitutional advancement towards independence was nearing completion. On 30 April 1951, the draft constitution report was published. It recommended "caution" in planning British Honduras' constitutional advancement.<sup>55</sup> The PUP immediately classified the report a farce, and demanded self-government at once.<sup>56</sup> Very shortly after this, the colonial government dissolved the Belize City Council. Its specific reasoning had to do with disloyalty to the Royal Family due to the Council's failure to hang a portrait of the King of England in their council chambers. In effect this "blatant abuse of power" by the colonial government strengthened the PUP's determination in its struggle against colonialism and for self-determination.<sup>57</sup> New elections were held for the Belize City Council on 29 March 1952 and despite British efforts to dilute the PUP's strength through both arrest and disqualification of candidates, and through proportional representation, the party still won three seats.

The PUP geared its campaign for the 1954 national



elections of the Legislative Assembly as a "crusade against colonialism."<sup>58</sup> Its rivals and the colonial government in turn labeled the PUP "openly disloyal and subversive."<sup>59</sup> Despite the efforts of the PUP's opponents, the PUP won eight of nine seats in the fifteen member Legislative Assembly--the other six members were appointed.

PUP Vice-President George Price was one of the victorious candidates in the 1954 election. Mr. Price had been elected his party's vice-president at its first convention in 1951. He later became its president on 27 September 1956 when a party split over the Federation issue led the previous president to create a new party.

In 1957, Legislative Assembly elections were held again and the PUP carried all nine of the elected seats using an effective campaign aimed against the Federation. George Price was elevated to membership on the Executive Council of the Legislative Assembly following the 1957 election, but he was later expelled for having had a supposedly secret meeting with a Guatemalan Minister while on a trip to London.<sup>60</sup> Mr. Price had openly supported a position that Belize's future must include greater economic integration with the Central American countries. Many also believed him to favor some sort of political association with Guatemala as a method of remedying the Guatemalan territorial claim. He did not favor this position, although his political opponents were faithful in their efforts to try to capitalize on any inferred Price-Guatemala connection.<sup>61</sup>

Although Mr. Price lost his seat on the Executive





Council, he retained his seat in the Assembly and he in fact became the Deputy Speaker. While in this position, however, he was arrested for seditious libel, yet never convicted, for comments made concerning an upcoming visit by Princess Margaret. Mr. Price was clearly not a favorite among the colonial administration, yet he was a favorite and popular national spokesman for Belizean independence.

In 1959, another constitutional review was conducted. On 1 September, Sir Hilary Blood, the Commissioner for Constitutional Reform presented his recommendations. In agreement with the 1951 report, he too recommended that British Honduras proceed slowly with constitutional advancement. He cited the Guatemalan complication, Belizeans simply not being ready for independence and PUP positions favoring independence with alignment more towards Central America and the United Nations than with the Commonwealth.<sup>62</sup>

In response to the Blood Report, the Legislative Assembly voted on 18 December 1959 to send a bipartisan delegation to London to seek further constitutional advancement.<sup>63</sup> A United Front was formed by members of the PUP and the National Independence Party (NIP) and they carried their case to London in 1960.<sup>64</sup> They were successful in negotiating a new constitution that carried Belize one step closer towards independence. Among the changes of the new constitution was the expansion of the Legislative Assembly to twenty-five seats including eighteen elected seats. The leader of the majority party was also called the First Minister. This constitution took effect in March 1961 after



the general elections scheduled for that year. The PUP won all of the eighteen seats and Mr. Price became the first, First Minister.

Although the British Honduran colonial administration was initially very hostile to the PUP and its goals, by the late 1950s "Britain began to think in terms of liquidating the residue of her empire in the Caribbean."<sup>65</sup> A London Times editorial stated:

This territory is no longer of any conceivable economic or strategic use . . . it absorbs large sums of development money . . . which are difficult to justify economically.<sup>66</sup>

At the colonial governor's urging, another constitutional conference was held in London during July 1963 to discuss possible independence for British Honduras. Because of the unresolved Guatemalan territorial claim and potential military threat, independence was still not seen as a viable option yet, but Britain did write another new constitution for British Honduras that granted full internal self-government on 1 January 1964.

Under the new self-governing constitution the legislative structure became bicameral with an eight member appointed Senate and an eighteen member elected House of Representatives. The period between elections was stretched from three to five years and the names were changed for a few positions. The First Minister became the Premier, and the Executive Council became the Cabinet. The Premier was selected by a British appointed Governor from among the majority party within the House of Representatives. Conse-



quently, George Price became the first Premier of British Honduras.

One other topic dealt with during the 1963 constitutional conference was a name change for the country. The name Belize had already long been in use throughout Central America and British Honduras, but especially among the membership of the PUP. The PUP had in fact resolved to have the name of the country altered to Belize at its very first party convention in 1951. In 1963, the British agreed to the name change for British Honduras but it was not to be effective until its attainment of full independence, which was expected and understood to be the next step in constitutional advancement. Since independence did not come as soon as anticipated, Britain eventually relented and allowed British Honduras to officially become Belize on 1 June 1973.<sup>67</sup>

In March 1965, elections were held for the first time under the new constitution. George Price maintained his position as Premier and the PUP continued to dominate the House of Representatives by maintaining sixteen seats. It was during the PUP's 1965 campaign and the year that followed that the Belize Government sought to internationalize its quest for independence and the Guatemalan territorial claim. The 1965 election Manifesto stated: "The PUP Government will send a delegation to the United Nations to make known to the whole world the Belizean unbreakable will to self-determine its independence on the Central American mainland."<sup>68</sup> Belize did send a delegation to the United



Nations in 1967, but its primary focus initially was in internationalizing its plight in smaller regional and international organizations. Belize's international support slowly developed through the 1970s and finally culminated in the 139-0 approval of a November 1980 United Nations' resolution calling for Belizean independence. The fourth chapter will provide a thorough review of Belize's diplomatic initiative to internationalize its plight.

Belize's international involvement was clearly motivated by its quest for independence--more specifically, the PUP Government's and George Price's quest for independence. The PUP maintained political power in Belize throughout the 1970s. It maintained seventeen seats in the 1969 elections, twelve seats in the 1974 elections, and thirteen seats in the 1979 election. Throughout this time, George Price remained the Premier. PUP political campaigns and political actions all revolved around the single issue of independence. Two of only nine articles which comprise the PUP Political Creed reiterate the preponderance of this issue. The creed states:

I am a member of the People's United Party, because I believe:

[ ]

4. that every Belizean is an integral part of the nation and has a right and duty to participate in the building of the INDEPENDENT BELIZE.

[ ]

9. that the new nation of Belize has a right to exist as a free, sovereign and independent nation of Central America in the heart of the Caribbean Basin.<sup>69</sup>

Belize's diplomatic initiative to internationalize its quest for independence gained its first major success at the





1975 Summit of the Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>70</sup> A resolution endorsing Belizean independence passed unanimously. This included the United Kingdom's support, however it still felt confined by Guatemala's territorial claim and military threat. It was generally believed in Britain and Belize, that if the British troops that had guarded Belize since 1977 ever left, that Guatemala would invade.<sup>71</sup> Because of this paradox, Belize sought to secure some sort of defense guarantee for a post independence Belize. As early as 1975, the PUP Government had indicated that it was

. . . not prepared to allow this threat indefinitely to postpone the independence of Belize and is prepared to assume . . . any suitable security arrangement that will ensure the safety of the people of Belize and preserve the independence of Belize.<sup>72</sup>

During Belize's 1970s participation in international forums it sought especially hard to gain the commitment of other countries to join in a multinational defense force for Belize. Although many were supportive of the idea, none were willing to commit themselves on Belize's behalf.

After the success of the 1980 United Nations resolution calling for Belize's independence, the United Kingdom committed itself to bring Belize to independence before the end of 1981. Britain hoped earnestly for a negotiated settlement with Guatemala, but, it was not to be. Remaining true to its word, Britain brought Belize to independence on 21 September 1981 in spite of the "lingering obstacle" that had previously prevented complete constitutional advancement and independence for almost eighteen years.<sup>73</sup>



### Dependent Independence

The idea of some sort of security guarantee for an independent, but threatened Belize had been discussed for some time in both the British and Belizean press. The general consensus, up until 1980, was that Britain would never be willing to provide any defense for an independent Belize. This was in fact the stated policy of the British Labor Governments that dominated the 1970s. In 1977, a letter from an official in the British Foreign Office stated: "I can confirm that it is our general policy not to engage in defence commitments to ex-dependent territories once they achieve full independence."<sup>74</sup> An analysis of the Belize issue in 1978 also stated: "Britain for its part is keen for Belize to become independent but it is not prepared to make exceptions by shielding Belize with a post independence defence treaty."<sup>75</sup> With the victory of the British Conservative Party in 1979, British willingness to make an exception to this policy seemed to be forthcoming.

An August 1980 Times article indicated that the new Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher was "determined to press for a solution."<sup>76</sup> Only three months later, a November article indicated that independence was at hand and that it would include provisions for the stationing of troops in Belize to prevent a Guatemalan invasion--in short, a defense guarantee.<sup>77</sup> An earlier article in the Belizean magazine Brukdown had also indicated that, "Whitehall will confer independence on the colony regardless of whether Guatemalan and British diplomats reach an agreement to set-



tle the century old dispute."<sup>78</sup> The article also indicated that Britain was "firm in its commitment to provide a defence guarantee."<sup>79</sup> A December 1980 Times article further stated that an announcement by the Lord Privy Seal, Sir Ian Gilmore, indicated independence would be granted to Belize by the end of 1981, that the "British government will not allow this dispute to stand in the way of its new timetable for independence."<sup>80</sup>

Amid these stories, negotiations among British, Guatemalan and Belizean representatives began in London to discuss once again the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. The talks culminated in what was hailed as a "dramatic breakthrough."<sup>81</sup> On 11 March 1981, the three parties issued the news that they had signed a document which established headings for an agenda of agreements that were yet to be negotiated. This document became identified as the Heads of Agreement. The major significance of this document was that Guatemala agreed to drop its territorial claim to Belize. Following the successful negotiations, the Belizean negotiators returned to a hero's welcome in Belize City. On 16 March 1981, Premier Price addressed his very optimistic nation. He stated:

On Wednesday morning, the 11th of March 1981, I joined Minister Nicholas Ridley of the United Kingdom and Foreign Minister Rafael Castillo Valdez of Guatemala, in signing an agreement setting out a framework within which the long-standing dispute over Belizean territory between these two nations may be honourably and finally settled.<sup>82</sup>

Upon the signing of the Heads of Agreement, Britain was so optimistic that it scheduled a constitutional confer-



ence for Belize for the first week of April. It was felt that a new constitution for an independent Belize could finally be drafted. Premier Price planned on attending this conference but he was unfortunately detained at home due to a State of Emergency that was established in the face of violent opposition and riots. These uprisings were waged by a small minority of Belizeans that flagrantly opposed the provisions of the Heads of Agreement. They accused Premier Price of selling out his country.<sup>83</sup>

Regardless, the constitutional conference was conducted in London from 4-16 April. Mr. Nicholas Ridley presented the opening speech. He stated:

I take no pleasure, nor do any of us, that this highly important event has been so long delayed, nevertheless, it is a great satisfaction that the work which we began in the latest round of talks with the Guatemalans . . . has prospered. It enables us to take the important step of meeting in conference to consider constitutional provisions for the new nation of Belize, shortly to achieve its independence.<sup>84</sup>

Mr. Ridley went on to express optimism over the Heads of Agreement negotiations that were to resume in May and he indicated that the outcome of these negotiations would determine what sort of defense provisions, if any, that Belize would need. He concluded by reiterating:

I want, . . . to make clear now that for its part Her Majesty's Government intends to make arrangements for future security of Belize which will be appropriate to the circumstances, whatever they may be.<sup>85</sup>

Mr. Ridley also visited Belize in early May to meet with Premier Price and his Cabinet to discuss the next steps towards independence and the upcoming resumption of negotiations over the Heads of Agreement. While in Belize he





reaffirmed that the British government was honor bound to grant Belize its independence in 1981.<sup>86</sup>

The Heads of Agreement negotiations resumed in New York City on 20 May 1981. They were reportedly productive but not conclusive. Additional talks were scheduled for June but were then postponed until July. Upon their resumption on 6 July, it became apparent that the negotiators were at an impasse. One of the provisions of the Heads of Agreement called for Guatemala to have the "use and enjoyment" of two small cays off the southern coast of Belize.<sup>87</sup> Belizean intent was for Belize to maintain sovereignty over the islands but to allow Guatemalans access to them for recreational use. During the July negotiations, however, it became clear from Guatemala that it wanted the islands forever in order to establish military and naval bases.<sup>88</sup> Belize adamantly refused to allow these new Guatemalan demands and the talks ended. Despite this disagreement, the talks ended amicably and there was still some hope of renewed negotiations to further resolve the unsettled agenda items of the Heads of Agreement. Following his return from the failed talks, Premier Price addressed his nation and stated:

It is unlikely that the Heads of Agreement can be made into treaties before the end of the United Nations Plenary session this year; nevertheless, our policy of a secure independence with all our territory will proceed along the other road, that is, an independence with a suitable security guarantee.<sup>89</sup>

Only a week following the collapsed talks, Premier Price flew to London to negotiate the final arrangements for independence. After only four days of meetings, he returned



with the news that Independence Day was set for 21 September 1981. He also returned with a communique on the British defense arrangement. It was a time-vague commitment that only guaranteed a British military presence in Belize for an "appropriate period."<sup>90</sup>

The defense communique had also called for the creation of a multinational defense force to eventually replace the British and for an increase in the strength of the Belizean Defense Force (BDF). The BDF had only recently been created on 1 January 1978 as Belize's first standing army. In 1981, it still consisted of only several hundred men and women. The idea of a multinational defense force was for it to be comprised of participants from the Commonwealth of Nations or the United Nations. This had earlier gained the appeal of the PUP Government but its efforts toward recruiting countries willing to commit themselves on Belize's behalf had not met with success.

Premier Price's announcement of independence with a defense guarantee met very mixed receptions. Guatemala was very angry. It broke off consular relations with Britain and it closed its border with Belize. It also withdrew its earlier renouncement of Belizean territory and returned to its original territorial claim to all of Belize. Within Belize, while Premier Price was very optimistic, both opponents and supporters of his Government were concerned about the time-vague character of the British defense guarantee.

Brukdown, which usually seemed to offer a fair and wide range of opinions on the Government, printed articles



concerning the upcoming Independence Day that did not share Premier Price's optimism. Articles appeared with titles such as, "September 21: Tomorrow's Noon is Today...but is It Freedom or Fool's Gold?"<sup>91</sup> "¡Hoy Independencia! ¿Manana Que?"<sup>92</sup> and "Independence: Ritual or Reality?"<sup>93</sup> A dominant feeling among Belizeans seemed to be that their independence was a rather empty one since it came only with British defense support--support that was not considered likely to remain for very long. One Belizean journalist, expressing a very cynical view of British trustworthiness with regard to the anticipated length of the "appropriate period" wrote:

If history has taught anything it is that British diplomacy is nothing if not perfidious. In fact the continuing saga of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute represents a textbook study of the use of arrogance, duplicity, and penury in the conduct of foreign affairs.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the critics, Belize did celebrate its independence on 21 September 1981. The celebrations were a joyous occasion for most, but overall it was not a grand affair. The fact that a sudden downpour washed out a barge fireworks display and almost postponed the official raising ceremony of the Belizean flag, was perhaps prophetic for the new Belize. Representatives from sixty-one countries participated in the festivities, but the official government opposition party, the United Democratic Party (UDP) boycotted them. Britain sent a member of the Royal Family to represent the Crown but Prince Michael of Kent was largely an unknown distant cousin. The major United States weeklies were sent to cover the celebration but Time did not even run



its story until one week after U.S.News.<sup>95</sup> Their articles reflected the same pessimism as those in Belize. Joseph Bernham's "In Belize, One Weak Cheer for Independence" in U.S.News noted that there was a general ambivalence towards independence and that there were no mass celebrations.<sup>96</sup> In Britain, the London Sunday Times Magazine did print a feature article on Belize but two days following Independence Day an unflattering article also appeared in the Times that mentioned the open sewers of Belize City.<sup>97</sup>

While many were indeed critical and suspicious of Belize's new independence, it was nevertheless a new independent country. George Price's PUP Government had finally succeeded in its long sought goal. However, he was to learn quickly, "that independence does not quite mean what it says."<sup>98</sup> Belize did little more than begin a new dependent independence. The minimal diminishment of the British presence was inconsequential due to the maintenance of British military forces. Belize remained clearly dependent on Britain for its defense against the lingering Guatemalan threat. It also remained financially dependent upon Britain and other countries whose generosity had long provided a staple of Belize's economic base. Belize had however, succeeded remarkably in gaining the respect and admiration of the world body. Belize had become a new international actor in its own right. The mere representation of sixty-one countries at Belize's Independence Day festivities testifies vividly to this. This paper will further examine Belize's international relations after a brief look at its ongoing





affairs with Guatemala and Britain.



## CHAPTER III

### POST INDEPENDENCE RELATIONS:

#### BELIZE, GUATEMALA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

##### Negotiations

Upon Belize's attainment of independence, the United Kingdom sought with renewed dedication to resolve the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. It hoped the "appropriate period" of its military involvement would be minimal. Belize, likewise, was dissatisfied with the situation which mandated a continued British military presence and, in effect, created a dependent independence. Since the continuing Guatemalan threat was the sole reason for this state of affairs, Prime Minister Price took advantage of his first opportunity in an international forum, as an independent nation, to address this issue. Speaking at the United Nations only four days after attaining independence, he said:

. . . a neighbour to which we extend the hand of friendship and the offer of economic regional co-operation has not responded yet to our invitation. Yet we stand ready to pursue the formula for peace agreed upon by the United Kingdom, Guatemala and Belize in a determined endeavour to search for a peaceful solution of the dispute between the United Kingdom and Guatemala, . . .<sup>1</sup>

The formula for peace to which Mr. Price referred, was the May 1981 Heads of Agreement. Belize and the United Kingdom were still satisfied with its provisions and they hoped to continue to try to persuade Guatemala to accept



them. In December 1981, Prime Minister Price extended an invitation to Guatemala to renew their treaty negotiations, and to invest in Belize.<sup>2</sup> Guatemala refused Mr. Price's request for negotiations, stating that Guatemala would deal only with Britain, however, it did agree to open the Guatemala-Belize border for trade on 1 January 1982.<sup>3</sup>

In early 1982, it appeared from the British perspective, that its appropriate period of military involvement might be drawing to a close. It seemed the reason for remaining in Belize--to avert a Guatemalan threat--was no longer a pressing issue. The United States had recently announced plans to provide military and economic aid to Belize under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, and, the new Guatemalan government of President Rios Mott seemed far less threatening. Although President Rios Mott had abolished the Guatemalan constitution which maintained Guatemala's Belizean claim, he governed under a Fundamental Governing Statute which included the statement: "Guatemala maintains its rights in relation to Belizean territory."<sup>4</sup> Despite this, he still seemed more amenable to peaceful negotiations. He had also pledged that Guatemala would not use its military power to recoup Belizean territory. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the United Kingdom was fearful of becoming embroiled in a Central American conflagration. An April 1982 London Times article indicated that the "threat from Guatemala was more rhetorical than real."<sup>5</sup> It further stated:

Britain is seeking an early withdrawal because of the



cost and because the government, concerned that it could find itself being sucked into the political turbulence spreading across Central America, does not wish to maintain a defence commitment to a state which has become fully independent.<sup>6</sup>

By October 1982, President Rios Mott indicated he was ready to resume negotiations.<sup>7</sup> Later that year, in December, he also indicated to United States President Reagan that Guatemala wanted a negotiated settlement on Belize in lieu of any type of military solution.<sup>8</sup>

With renewed optimism, negotiations finally began in New York City on 24 January 1983, for the first time since Belizean independence.<sup>9</sup> They ended very abruptly, however, when Guatemala indicated it would limit its territorial claim from all of Belize to only the southern district of Toledo, comprising a mere third of the country.<sup>10</sup> Belize rebuffed this supposedly conciliatory gesture and adamantly refused to cede any territory. Guatemala consequently returned to its original claim to all of Belize.<sup>11</sup>

Following the failure of the January talks, the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Francis Pym, indicated that both sides seemed as far apart as ever at trying to reach a settlement.<sup>12</sup> President Rios Mott's hard line negotiating stance on Belizean territory was seen by many as simply an effort to arouse nationalistic sentiment and to in turn divert attention from the ongoing brutal repression and economic crisis of Guatemala.<sup>13</sup> Regardless, the 1983 negotiations ended almost as soon as they began and no Guatemalan efforts towards resuming talks were made again until May 1984.<sup>14</sup>





During this interim, Belize tried repeatedly to pursue a negotiated settlement. Prime Minister Price's 1983 Independence Day speech was an especially fervent cry for peace. He stated:

To those who claim our land and cause us needless worry, we hold out the hand of friendship. We ask that they respect and recognize our right to determine our future as a nation free and sovereign within the land and sea boundaries of Belize, which existed even before the independence of Central America, for we wish to live in peace and harmony with all our neighbours, of the region and with nations of the world.<sup>15</sup>

Only a month prior to this speech, President Rios Mott of Guatemala was overthrown in a military coup. His replacement, General Mejia Victores, maintained Guatemala's belligerent position of claiming territorial rights to all of Belize.

Within the United Kingdom, concern focused on the defense agreement for Belize and the lingering presence of British armed forces. The House of Commons was especially interested in the extent of the defense agreement. It was seen to be an agreement that involved an "open ended commitment that the United Kingdom had entered to defend a country over whose foreign and defence policy Britain no longer had any control."<sup>16</sup> It had been negotiated in secret by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and despite demands by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee to have its contents revealed, the Government refused.

In May 1984, preliminary meetings were held among negotiators from the United Kingdom, Guatemala and Belize, to further plan for talks in July. During the talks in



July, it was reported in Belize that Guatemala negotiated directly with Belize for the first time.<sup>17</sup> This was seen as significant, because, in past negotiations, although representatives of all three countries were usually present, the Guatemalans had always conducted bilateral discussions with the British--Belize had simply been an observer. Interestingly, Guatemalan perspectives on the July 1984 talks continued to view Belize strictly as an observer, despite Belizean perceptions.<sup>18</sup>

Reports from the negotiations in July were initially very optimistic. At one point, Guatemala was "reported to have dropped its demands for territorial concessions" and to have instead been concentrating "on changes in the maritime boundaries off the Atlantic Coast."<sup>19</sup> It was also stated that the present Guatemalan Government's attitude was "very close to recognition" of Belize.<sup>20</sup> Guatemala's Foreign Minister, Fernando Andrade, was reported to be "keen to settle the country's dispute with Belize."<sup>21</sup> He also proposed the renewal of consular level diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom.<sup>22</sup> The most optimistic news from these ongoing negotiations occurred after an August 1984 meeting of the three leading contenders for the Guatemalan presidency and government officials of the United States.

The United States was credited with having engineered a rapprochement plan between Guatemala and Belize, whereby a new Guatemalan constitution would be written to eliminate a claim to sovereignty over Belize and Guatemala would officially recognize Belize.<sup>23</sup> One of the participants in these



meetings, Jorge Carpio Nicolle of the Union of the National Center (UCN), intimated that the Guatemalan Government "tacitly accepted Belizean independence . . ." but that "future governments must be guided by a more realistic vision of the old dispute."<sup>24</sup> Another participant, Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo of the Christian Democratic Party (DCG), indicated that his party "recognized Belize as a 'different country' and that he would like to have the issue put to a national referendum."<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, these discussions and plans were to be only those of a new Government, and, although the current military Government did seem conciliatory and amenable to continuing negotiations, it was not prepared to implement any changes. In fact, during a fall meeting of the Organization of American States, Guatemala continued to reject Belize's status as an independent state. Similarly, Guatemala even refused to allow a Belizean softball team to participate in an October 1984 meet of the Regional Softball Federation that was to be hosted by Guatemala. Consequently, the meet was moved by the Federation to Puerto Rico in order to insure Belize's participation.<sup>26</sup>

Despite these minor setbacks, optimism was still high through 1984 for a final negotiated settlement. Belize was in the midst of ongoing negotiations in late 1984, when governmental elections were held. Since the Opposition won for the first time ever, the negotiations were postponed until the new Government had adequately prepared. Despite this change in the Belizean Government, Guatemalan Foreign



Minister Andrade reaffirmed his country's willingness to negotiate and "to maintain and fortify" its relations with Belize.<sup>27</sup> Just prior to the resumption of negotiations scheduled for New York City on 12 February 1985, Guatemala seemed once again to be shifting back to its larger territorial claims. The Guatemalan negotiator was apparently instructed to reiterate Guatemala's claims to Belizean territory. This position reflected a much tougher posture than any that Guatemala had espoused since the resumption of the talks in July 1984. The abrupt shift was attributed to differences among the ruling military leaders because of their fears that the upcoming presidential elections were likely to be lost to the more liberal Christian Democrats.<sup>28</sup>

Among the military leaders, one group favored a more pragmatic approach to the Belize issue. They felt discussions should not concentrate on "territorial cessions of little practical value for the Guatemalan economy" but rather on "economic objectives such as free ports, pipeline rights, and sea lanes."<sup>29</sup> The far right-wing of the military, however, believed that a tougher position on Belize gained much greater popular appeal and was therefore more beneficial in providing greater support for the military dominated National Liberation Movement (MLN) party and candidate.<sup>30</sup>

The new Belizean Government of the United Democratic Party (UDP) had approached the February negotiations with a willingness to implement the provisions of the old 1981 Heads of Agreement, despite their previous adamant opposi-





tion. The talks did begin as scheduled on 12 February 1985 at the United Nations in New York. Unfortunately, with Guatemala having returned to a hard line position requiring the cession of land, and with the UDP Government being no more willing to cede land than the previous Government, the talks were no more productive than those of the previous 126 years. Although talks were reportedly continuing in March 1985, Guatemalan Foreign Minister Fernando Andrade has indicated that Guatemala will not seek to find a final solution until after Guatemala's as yet unscheduled but upcoming presidential elections.<sup>31</sup>

#### Military Relations

During Belize's first Independence Day festivities, the Honorable Nicholas Ridley, the British Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the ranking member of the visiting British delegation, gave a speech wherein he indicated that the United Kingdom was "happy to provide the time and security" within which Belize could lay to rest its dispute with Guatemala.<sup>32</sup> The security to which Mr. Ridley referred had to do with the British defense guarantee that Britain agreed to provide upon Belize's attainment of independence. The actual provisions of the defense agreement were signed in December 1981, but, no details were ever revealed beyond the commitment that British forces would be maintained for an "appropriate period" within Belize to act as a deterrent against Guatemalan military aggression. An "appropriate period" was generally



interpreted to mean that British troops would remain in Belize until a Guatemalan settlement had been conducted, or at least until such time that the Guatemalan threat subsided. In a press interview during the independence celebration, Prime Minister Price was asked if he wanted the British to stay in Belize as long as there was not an agreement with Guatemala. He responded: "We would like them to stay until the need of their presence disappears. Part of that would depend on reaching an agreement with Guatemala."<sup>33</sup>

The size of the British forces that remained in Belize at independence was roughly the same as it had been since 1977 when Belize requested military aid in the face of an impending Guatemalan invasion. These forces consisted of 1800 men--300 of which were Gurkhas, a flight of four Harrier jump-jets and two flights of helicopters comprised of eight Pumas.<sup>34</sup> Although the figure for troop strength has varied in press accounts during the past four years from 1100 to 1800 men, the military presence in 1985 remains much as it did in 1977.<sup>35</sup>

Britain's early hopes were that its appropriate period of military involvement in an independent Belize would be over by the end of 1982.<sup>36</sup> Government statements and press articles appeared in April which seemed to reiterate this deadline. The Falklands Crisis of May 1982, however, led Britain to renege on any intended withdrawal deadlines. During the midst of the Falklands Crisis, Britain gave its reassurances of support to Belize that it would not back



down on its commitment.<sup>37</sup> Britain was reportedly embarrassed by the successful Argentine invasion of the Falklands and it was intent on not allowing a similar invasion of Belize.<sup>38</sup>

The British military presence in Belize was occasionally supplemented by routine visits of British ships. In September 1982, a British frigate visited; and in February 1983 the British jump-jet carrier, HMS Invincible did also. Prince Andrew was one of the visiting crew members of the HMS Invincible. Although his presence was not as an official representative of the Crown, he was the first immediate member of the Royal Family to visit the independent Belize.<sup>39</sup>

During this time period, Britain's military commitment to Belize seemed solid, however, there was some anxiety in Whitehall when U. S. President Reagan made overtures of renewing aid to Guatemala. It was felt that any new military aid to Guatemala could only further threaten Belize and British troops. Regardless, Britain's support to Belize in early 1983 remained solid.

In August 1983, an editorial appeared in the London Times supporting the continued British presence in Belize. It expressed optimism that the likelihood of Guatemala attempting any military action against Belize was remote in view of Guatemala's hands being tied to internal problems. It further indicated that the presence was probably "comforting to Washington" and that it was an honorable presence and a cost effective contribution to the United States'



search for stability in an area of crucial interest to them.<sup>40</sup>

An article in an August 1983 Latin America Weekly Report had a similar focus. It stated that it was:

. . . ironic that 'appropriate' in many peoples minds, has less to do with the Guatemalan threat than with the growing fear that an East-West military conflagration in the South could spread to engulf Belize.<sup>41</sup>

It further stated that it was:

. . . generally assumed that the strong British presence will constitute a credible deterrent to any such rumblings and at the same time relieve the U. S. of the need overtly to defend Central America's north-eastern flank.<sup>42</sup>

Despite this perceived additional usefulness for the British forces, stories began circulating in October of 1983, that indicated the British would withdraw their troops by the end of 1984. Their commitment was "considered no longer feasible."<sup>43</sup> Speculation also began concerning whether or not the U. S. would step in to fill the void created by a British departure.<sup>44</sup> The United States was noncommittal as to the speculation concerning its military future in Belize, but it was not without opinion in its support for a continued British presence. President Reagan reportedly convinced Prime Minister Thatcher to maintain the British forces beyond her 1984 deadline in a meeting in January 1984.<sup>45</sup> Other actions by Mr. Reagan in February 1984 did not however endear him to Mrs. Thatcher. He decided to renew non-lethal military equipment sales to Guatemala. This consisted of spare parts for helicopters. Mrs. Thatcher immediately sent a formal letter of protest to the





U. S. President, citing the threat that any military aid to Guatemala would impose on her British troops.<sup>46</sup>

At the end of 1984, British troops were not withdrawn, but in late December, Mrs. Thatcher was said to be "anxious to end the military presence as rapidly as possible."<sup>47</sup> February 1985 was the last reported deadline for a British troop withdrawal; but, that date too has come and gone and British troops remain, serving time in Belize for their "appropriate period."<sup>48</sup>

The British are clearly no longer as "happy to provide the time and security" that Mr. Nicholas Ridley spoke of so cheerfully in 1981. British feelings are perhaps best summed up in the words of a British army official assigned to the British forces in Belize. He stated: "We don't want to be here, . . . We want to get out of here. The U. K. is trying to move away from being a colonial power."<sup>49</sup> Although the British may be unhappy to remain in Belize, the majority of Belizeans are quite happy to have them remain.

One of the things that the British forces have done, in addition to providing a deterrent from their mere presence, is to provide training and support to the Belizean Defense Force (BDF). The BDF was created through British support on 1 January 1978, with the intent of eventually having it provide the defensive garrison that Belize needed. Although the BDF has grown to a fighting force of over seven hundred men and women, it is unlikely to ever reach credible strength to maintain the defense of Belize on its own. This is due largely to the problems of finding suitable recruits



from among the small population of only 160,000 people.<sup>50</sup>

In August 1983, Britain provided two Defender aircraft to the BDF.<sup>51</sup> They were multipurpose aircraft capable of carrying cargo, troops, bombs, machine guns and missiles. Their primary mission, however, was planned to be land and maritime surveillance and patrol. Just over a year later, in September 1984, the British also provided the BDF with two twenty meter patrol boats.<sup>52</sup> They were small coast guard cutter type craft, equipped with fifty calibre machine guns and radar. Britain not only supplied this equipment to the BDF, it has also provides over two million pounds annually towards its upkeep and operation, in addition to providing British military officers which command the Belizean troops, fly the aircraft and drive the boats.

For obvious reasons, it should seem clear that the Belizeans do not want the British forces to leave. It has been said that with Belize's fragile independence, threat from Guatemala, and lifeless economy, "the British troops have come to represent the last vestige of stability."<sup>53</sup>

#### Economic Relations

Belize's lifeless economy is largely attributed to its own reliance on sugarcane as an export crop in the face of falling sugar prices.<sup>54</sup> Although efforts have been made to diversify its economic base, one solid and consistent contributor to its economy has been the United Kingdom. Economic reasons alone are a good inducement for Belize to try and maintain its British ties and military presence.



Part of the estimated \$50 million that Britain spends annually in support of its own forces finds its way into Belize's economy. This money in addition to the personal spending by the British military personnel in Belize is said to account for ten to fifteen percent of Belize's national income, even though the British troops comprise only one percent of the Belizean population.<sup>55</sup> The British troops most definitely spend alot of money on "beer, taxis and weekends at the Cays."<sup>56</sup>

Other than the direct and indirect economic benefits of the military presence, the British Government has continued to offer financial aid for other programs. In fact, much of the Belize Government's budget comes from British aid.<sup>57</sup>

An extensive long term bilateral agreement was signed in November 1981 for twelve million pounds of assistance. It included provisions for the training of Belizeans, technical cooperation, consulting services, surveys, research projects and small capital grants.<sup>58</sup> The British, prior to independence, had also initiated an extensive road building and rehabilitation program. They have continued this program since independence. Britain derives very little benefit, if any, from its aid to Belize. It certainly does not gain any financial advantage except for individual investors. The two countries do maintain an active trade relationship, but it is minimal from the British perspective. In 1980, only nine percent of Belize's exports went to Britain and only twenty-one percent of Belizean imports



were of British origin.

Overall, British-Belizean relations have remained very strong. They have worked well together in trying to negotiate with Guatemala, and Britain has continued to provide the economic and military assistance, albeit unwantingly, that Belize desperately needs. Certainly, Britain would like to end its involvement. Prime Minister Thatcher has made that very clear, however, the status quo that created the British presence has remained largely unchanged. Consequently, the "awkward diplomatic problem" of British-Belizean relations continues today.<sup>59</sup>





## CHAPTER IV

## BELIZE'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In Belize's struggle to become an independent nation, it became involved in a number of international organizations. This was a very deliberate attempt on the part of the Belizean Government to gain the attention of the world. Belize found it necessary to do this because of the persistent Guatemalan claim to Belizean territory and because of the United Kingdom's reluctance to grant independence to a threatened colony. This British reluctance was gradually overcome as Belize "skillfully presented its case before the bar of international public opinion . . . ." <sup>1</sup> When Britain finally did grant independence to Belize on 21 September 1981, the Guatemalan territorial claim--Britain's principal reason for denying independence earlier--was still intact. The primary reason that Britain finally reneged on its earlier position was because of the overwhelming international support that Belize had garnered for its cause, an action virtually unique among small states.

Belize began its diplomatic initiative among its natural friends and allies. As it did so, these fellow countries helped to spread Belize's message, such that its support grew exponentially from the Commonwealth Caribbean countries to the Commonwealth of Nations, and from the



Commonwealth of Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement to the United Nations. In gaining the audience of these international bodies, Belize won many new friends and supporters. Many of these, such as the Latin American countries and the United States, had been long term Belizean adversaries in the Belize-Guatemalan dispute.

Belize's diplomatic initiative is indeed a remarkable success story which this chapter will unfold as it traces the development of Belize's relationships with the international organizations and the various countries that helped to bring Belize to independence. What is most remarkable about Belize's success is the skill with which it used very limited diplomatic resources to achieve overwhelming international support. Admittedly, this diplomatic success was not achieved solely on the skillful efforts of individuals. The fact that Belize's cause was the near universally desired cause of anti-colonialism or decolonization was a major contributing factor.

This chapter will also illustrate how Belize has successfully exploited its newly attained independence and international recognition. Belize changed quickly from an observer using certain international forums to an actual member of these forums and others. Belize has indeed become a new international actor.

#### Non-Aligned Movement

The summit meetings of Non-Aligned countries were some of the first international forums that Belize used to es-



pouse its view of the Guatemalan territorial claim, as well as its own right to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The PUP Government had long held to a non-aligned perspective in Belize's foreign policy. Additionally, many of the member states of the Non-Aligned Movement shared Belize's colonial struggle and they offered a sympathetic ear to its cries for support.

The Algiers Summit of 1973 was one of the first in which Belize achieved some notable attention and support.<sup>2</sup> Just prior to the meeting, Carl Rogers, Belize's Deputy Premier, undertook a trip to the Middle East and Africa to spread Belize's message. Among other countries, he won the support of Egypt, Lebanon, Tanzania and the Sudan.<sup>3</sup> Belize had already long been supported by two of the strongest members of the Non-Aligned Movement--Cuba, its Caribbean neighbor, and India, with whom it shared a British heritage.

At the Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned countries that met August 1976 in Sri Lanka, Belizean Premier, George Price had the opportunity to address the group. In that session Belize's participation was that of an observer, but Premier Price's opportunity to speak was a clear indication that Third World attention was being gained and quickly moving toward unanimous support of Belize. His comments were largely directed toward seeking security arrangements and guarantees so that Belize could proceed with decolonization and independence, in spite of Guatemala's territorial claim and military threats.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout Belize's use of Third World forums one of



its more vocal and faithful supporters was Cuba. Through its own efforts, Cuba had been calling on Britain to grant Belize its independence.<sup>5</sup> Although no official offers have ever been revealed, some have intimated that Cuba was also willing to offer Belize the security guarantee that Britain so reluctantly provided.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, Belize did not shy away from accepting the help of socialist governments such as Castro's Cuba, Bishop's Grenada or Manley's Jamaica. Belize in fact courted the Sandinistas in Nicaragua prior to their successful revolution.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Belize's relationships with socialist governments were a major concern to some--the United States in particular--Premier Price merely explained them as being part of Belize's non-aligned position and respecting of the very rights that Belize sought for itself--sovereignty and self-determination.

In 1979, the summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement was held in Havana, Cuba. A record ninety-five countries and liberation movements were represented. Belize participated once again as an active observer, once again being afforded the opportunity to address the group. Its participation in 1979 was supported for the first time by Latin American countries other than Cuba. In particular, Belize was supported by Panama who had earlier offered its support at the United Nations.

The meeting focused a great deal of attention to the struggles against colonialism, the principles of non-intervention and the rights of individual countries to effect changes in their political, economic and social struc-





tures. In particular, the meeting expressed its "unconditional backing of the Belizean people's inalienable right to self-determination, independence and territorial integrity."<sup>8</sup> With Guatemala its obvious focus, it also condemned all pressures and threats that would seek to prevent Belize from full exercise of those rights. The attending heads of state and government also urged full support from the Non-Aligned Movement at the United Nations for the annual resolutions calling for Belize's speedy progress towards immediate and secure independence, with strict respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>9</sup>

Having begun its diplomatic initiative to win international support for independence from among its Third World friends, within days of having gained its independence, Belize became a full-fledged member of the Non-Aligned Movement. On 25 September 1981 Belize was admitted as the ninety-sixth member of the organization. Only several weeks earlier, the Belizean Attorney General, Said Musa, had issued an official statement which reiterated Belize's special destiny as a member of the Third World to contribute to the evolution of a just international society.<sup>10</sup>

In a press interview with Prime Minister Price, just days after the Belizean Independence Day, a question was asked as to whether or not Belize could survive the pressures of having Cuba so close. Prime Minister Price answered:

Cuba is a member of the Non-Aligned--the Presidency of Non-Aligned; a member of the United Nations, a member (not active) of the Organization of American States and



a member of certain Caribbean Communities. Well of course we'll have to work along with Cuba, since they are a member of those international organizations. But we are working with other countries too.<sup>11</sup>

His answer clearly did not address the implications of the question because Prime Minister Price did not seem to feel any "pressures" from Cuba. On the contrary, Cuba offered college scholarships to Belizean students and they were eager to establish diplomatic and commercial ties to the new independent Belize.<sup>12</sup>

Much of Cuba's initiative was foiled by opposition within Belize, both from the official Opposition and the right-wing elements of the Government. In particular, efforts by Cuba to develop its trade with Belize through the establishment of a commercial mission in January 1982 were stopped by the Chamber of Commerce and trade union leaders.<sup>13</sup> Only months later, Belize again parted company with Cuba as well as the overwhelming majority of the Non-Aligned countries, when it sided with Britain over Argentina in the Falklands War. Despite these differences, Belize continued to identify with the Non-Aligned Movement and to use it as an international forum to espouse its views.

At the summit meeting held at New Delhi, India, in May of 1983, Deputy Prime Minister Rogers addressed the organization. He began by showering praise on the outgoing chairman of the movement, Cuban President Fidel Castro, citing his "personal commitment . . . to the ideals of peace, justice and development. His sensitive and enlightened chairmanship helped to steer our Movement through a very



difficult time."<sup>14</sup> Mr. Rogers went on to outline the persistent threat to Belize by Guatemala's continuing claim to its land and to suggest the role for the Non-Aligned Movement in response to Belize predicament. He stated:

In our struggle to preserve our sovereignty and territorial integrity, we are convinced that the Non-Aligned Movement has to play a positive role, and assume a special responsibility. If countries in predicaments such as ours are not to be forced to have recourse to one of the great powers, with consequent dangers to the preservation of the non-aligned policies, then our Movement must develop concrete and effective mechanisms for solving the problems of security and survival that bedevil so many of our members.<sup>15</sup>

What kinds of "mechanisms" Mr. Rogers had in mind were never clearly identified, nor did his comments seem to solicit any suggestions towards developing any. The closing comments of Mr. Rogers' address reiterated support of the typical Non-Aligned positions. These included support of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, support of the Bishop government in Grenada, the recognition of SWAPO as the legitimate governmental spokesman for Namibia, and the recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its chairman, Yassar Arafat, as the legitimate spokesman for the Palestinian people and their right to a homeland.<sup>16</sup>

Since Belize's participation in the 1983 summit, its Third World type rhetoric has been curtailed somewhat. Rather than reflecting any real change in the PUP Government's philosophy and ideology, it seems more a matter of increasing U.S. influence. The cooling of Belize's interactions with Cuba has been specifically attributed to this.<sup>17</sup>

Whether or not Belize continues to participate in the



Non-Aligned Movement and to identify with its ideas remains to be seen, especially in view of the recent change in the Belize Government. The UDP Government has indicated that it will remain a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, but that it will definitely favor a pro-Western stance on foreign policy issues.<sup>18</sup> Regardless, Belize's early participation seemed to have served its interest well by giving Belize a large international audience in which to proclaim its quest for independence--an audience that reflected its support wholeheartedly in other more prestigious international organizations.

#### Caribbean Nations

One of the areas where Belize first began its diplomatic initiative to win international support was the Caribbean. Belize shares a common colonial heritage with many of the Caribbean island nations but most notably with the former British colonies like itself, or the Commonwealth Caribbean countries as they are more commonly known. These countries established a free trade association in the 1960s which Belize joined in 1971. It later evolved into the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1974. One of the early goals of CARICOM was to attempt to coordinate the foreign policies of its member states. Article seventeen of the CARICOM treaty created a standing committee of ministers responsible for foreign affairs. It further stated the intention to bring about "the fullest possible coordination of their foreign policies within their respec-





tive competencies and adapting as far as possible common positions in major international issues."<sup>19</sup> At its inception, CARICOM's membership was limited to the then four independent Commonwealth Caribbean nations, but, observer status was also afforded to the other British colonies prior to their own independence and resultant Commonwealth membership.

CARICOM's efforts to carry out the intent of article seventeen's foreign policy coordination goal proved to be one of its more difficult task. However, one of the few foreign policy issues in which CARICOM consensus has been unanimous, has been support for Belize in its dispute with Guatemala. In 1974, the Heads of Government of CARICOM countries met in Guyana. Among their many actions was the passing of a resolution supporting the independence of Belize. One primary advantage of the strong showing of support that the CARICOM countries provided was their additional support and unanimous voice at other international forums, in particular, the Commonwealth of Nations, the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS).

The CARICOM Heads of Government met again in 1976 and echoed their support for Belize, however, it was not until a 1977 meeting of the OAS in St. Georges, Grenada that the CARICOM voice received international notice. By 1977, CARICOM's membership included Grenada and during the OAS meeting, Grenada joined with Jamaica, Barbados, Panama and Trinidad-Tobago in issuing a joint communique in support of



Belize's independence. The communique received solid support from all of the CARICOM countries as well as Panama and Surinam. In contrast, Guatemala, which obviously opposed the communique did not have any overt backing when it spoke in opposition. This was cited as a tremendous loss of face for Guatemala and a real breakthrough in gaining Latin American support for Belize.<sup>20</sup>

The Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee also held a meeting in 1977 which included representatives from many of the CARICOM countries. Belize was a participant in these discussions and it took the opportunity in 1977 to offer to host the meeting for 1978. Belize's offer was accepted and in May 1978 it entertained representatives from throughout the Caribbean and Central America. Belize also used this opportunity to continue its diplomatic initiative to gain and maintain international support for its cause. It did so effectively in that a statement was issued by the Committee--one gathered primarily to discuss economic cooperation--endorsing Belize's call for a secure independence.

The CARICOM standing committee of ministers responsible for foreign affairs had maintained a very ineffectual existence up through the 1970s. They met at their creation in 1973, again in 1976 and twice in 1979. None of these meetings "achieved very much beyond the enunciation of vague statements of general principle."<sup>21</sup> An exception to this, however, was its steadfast and solid support for Belize. At the close of the decade the CARICOM countries did resolve to



improve their procedures of operation for addressing foreign affairs issues and for reaching greater integration.

In March 1980, the fifth meeting of CARICOM Foreign Ministers was held in St. Lucia. Their renewed spirit of cooperation still did not yield any substantial change in their modus operandi but their support for Belize was unbending. They "resolved to continue their efforts to support the Government and people of Belize in their struggle for early and secure independence with full territorial integrity."<sup>22</sup>

One area of contention among the CARICOM Foreign Ministers was the shifting political focus of Grenada. The socialist government headed by Maurice Bishop which took power in 1979 appeared to them to be forging ties with Cuba. The United States was not at all pleased with this change of events and it was quietly using its diplomatic pressure to persuade Grenada's sister countries to ostracize her. In particular, the United States was fairly successful in persuading the Caribbean countries not to participate in Grenada's March 1981 celebrations commemorating the second anniversary of its revolution. Belize was one of only five Caribbean nations that was not successfully persuaded and went anyway.

During this same month, Belmopan, Belize was the site of a CARICOM Foreign Ministers meeting. It was an extraordinary session that met 17-18 March as the result of the 11 March 1981 signing of the Heads of Agreement. The participating CARICOM Foreign Ministers issued a declaration



known as the Declaration of Belmopan. The participants included representatives from Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia and Trinidad-Tobago. Their declaration offered full support to the on-going negotiations and the Heads of Agreement. It also condemned any form of pressure which sought to make Belize compromise its sovereignty or violate its territorial integrity. The Foreign Ministers' declaration also went further than previous declarations of support by resolving to take "any action necessary" to defend the rights and interest of Belize.<sup>23</sup> As to what "any action necessary" may have meant was never well defined, yet it clearly offered one of the strongest statements of support that Belize had received thus far.

At the time of the Declaration of Belmopan, Belize's independence seemed imminent. The United Kingdom had already committed itself to insure an independent Belize by the close of 1981. The ongoing Anglo-Guatemalan negotiations also looked more promising than they had ever looked before. It was an optimistic time for Belize and its sister Commonwealth Caribbean countries. They could all jointly take pride in having provided the diplomatic support that had brought Belize to the threshold of independence. The Belizean Ambassador to CARICOM, Said Musa, acknowledged the contributions of Belize's Caribbean neighbors in an address made in July 1981. He stated:

Belize is a proud member of CARICOM. And it must never be forgotten that the countries of the Caribbean have been the frontline States who have waged an intense





diplomatic offensive on our behalf to help us to win our freedom and independence.<sup>24</sup>

Belize has continued to be involved in CARICOM and all of its integration goals. Likewise, CARICOM has continued to act as a spokesman for the Belizean cause because, Belizean independence did not come complete with Belizean freedom. The optimism expressed with the Heads of Agreement and the Declaration of Belmopan was thwarted when Guatemala renewed its territorial claim. Consequently, the Caribbean countries have continued to stand by Belize and to focus on the persisting issue of Guatemala's threat to its territorial integrity. At a CARICOM Council of Ministers meeting in January 1982 at Guyana and Foreign Ministers' meetings in March and April of 1982 in Belize, discussions of the Belize issue remained an agenda item and strong support favoring Belize remained intact.<sup>25</sup>

A November 1982 gathering of the CARICOM Heads of Government in Ocho Rios, Jamaica marked their first meeting since 1976. The membership ranks had expanded to twelve countries since then and the roster included, Antigua-Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad-Tobago. The island country of Montserrat also participated. The primary agenda item in 1982 was the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), yet, the lingering issue of Guatemala's territorial claim to Belize still retained attention. The Ocho Rios Declaration addressed the issue of border disputes and reaffirmed support



for the territorial integrity of Belize.<sup>26</sup> It also stipulated that "efforts should be intensified bilaterally and unilaterally to guarantee the security of Belize."<sup>27</sup> With regards to Belize's security, concern was expressed about its dependence on the British forces but there was "little enthusiasm for the establishment of a regional or Caribbean security force . . . " to replace them.<sup>28</sup>

During 1982, Belize also participated in other Caribbean forums and activities where it took the opportunity to continue to press its diplomatic initiative to keep the Belize issue alive. Deputy Prime Minister Carl Rogers attended June meetings of the Caribbean Group for Cooperation in Economic Development in Washington, D. C. and the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee in New York City. Belize also participated in the Central American and Caribbean Games held during August in Cuba.

Belize's active participation in Caribbean nations' activities as well as those of other international groupings served very well to establish and affirm its status and recognition as a sovereign, independent state. As this happened it only further alienated Guatemala with its territorial claim to Belizean land.

The ten year anniversary of CARICOM was marked by another Heads of Government meeting in Trinidad-Tobago during July 1983. Economic development was once again the primary agenda item, but true to form, the conference also issued a communique offering support to Belize and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Only



three months later, an emergency meeting of the Heads of Government was held in Trinidad-Tobago to discuss the military coup which had unseated Prime Minister Maurice Bishop in Grenada. The members were split over an appropriate action. Some of them sought military action and others did not. Belize was one of four countries that did not. A statement from its government indicated: "Our government remains firmly committed to the principles of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other states, the non-use of force and respect for the right to self-determination."<sup>29</sup> Whereas Belize stood among the minority of CARICOM countries and in clear opposition to U. S. policies, its non-interventionist stance simply reflected its own ideals and long-term aspirations in its own troubles with Guatemala. Belize also had the backing of its big brothers, Canada and the United Kingdom, in opposing the military actions in Grenada.

It was unfortunate that the foreign policy consensus that CARICOM had hoped to achieve among its member states was not prevalent when the Grenada incident took place. However, the split it caused did not prove to be overly divisive. A CARICOM Summit of Heads of Government was held in July 1984 in Nassau with the expressed intent to "patch up the differences" and "to consolidate and strengthen the bonds which have historically existed among the people of the Commonwealth Caribbean."<sup>30</sup> Surprisingly, Grenada per-se did not come up as an issue at the summit but rather a discussion on the "broader view of the security of small states which continue to be seriously threatened."<sup>31</sup> In this



context, the Belize issue arose and once again the Heads of Government called on the international community "to maintain its support for Belize in its effort to secure an early and peaceful resolution of the problems . . . " with which it is confronted.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, the Commonwealth Caribbean countries have been some of most steadfast supporters of Belize. Although their geographic size and their numbers are few, their persistent pleas on behalf of Belize contributed significantly in bringing the Belize issue to the forefront of international attention. One of the international forums in which the CARICOM countries spoke very effectively was in the larger Commonwealth of Nations.

#### Commonwealth of Nations

When Belize gained the attention of the Commonwealth of Nations at their 1975 Summit in Kingston, Jamaica, it was felt that it had finally fully internationalized the Belize-Guatemala issue.<sup>33</sup> The Jamaica Summit had representatives from thirty-three countries that represented one quarter of the world population and almost one fourth of the U. N. membership. In addition, the countries there represented every race, every climatic region of the globe and very diverse social and political backgrounds. "Never before had the Belize problem been aired at such an exalted diplomatic level."<sup>34</sup>

Although Belize had gained some attention in pre-1975 meetings of the Non-Aligned countries and the CARICOM coun-





tries, the meetings of these groups simply had not held the prestige or gained the attention of a world audience. However, many of Belize's supporters in these other organizations were also some of the more influential members of the Commonwealth of Nations. These countries included India and Tanzania which shared membership in the Non-Aligned Movement and Jamaica which shared membership in CARICOM. It was perhaps Jamaica, the host of the 1975 Summit, that offered the most significant support for Belize. It was able to line up sufficient backers to have the Belize issue "brought fairly and squarely as a central issue of the Conference."<sup>35</sup>

The discussions concerning Belize were initiated by the Barbados participants who had previously been delegated that responsibility by the membership of the CARICOM caucus. It was a consensus opinion that Britain's negotiations with Guatemala to resolve the Belize issue had been prolonged far too long. Although continuous negotiating efforts had taken place, the actual negotiations were very intermittent and had in fact been occurring for over 116 years. Clearly, Britain had been "dragging her feet."<sup>36</sup> The conference urged the United Kingdom to have its diplomats conduct the Anglo-Guatemalan negotiations with a new sense of urgency. Some members also felt that Britain should be willing to provide security guarantees for an independent Belize. Others felt this might be a more appropriate role for the Commonwealth or the United Nations.<sup>37</sup>

As the Belize issue was discussed, the African Commonwealth countries were inclined to give their over-



whelming support. They saw in the plight of Belize a struggle similar to their own and those of fellow African countries. The African origin of many Belizean citizens was also a common bond for unifying African support of Belize.<sup>38</sup>

The final communique of the Jamaica Summit gave "full support for the aspirations of the people of Belize for early independence."<sup>39</sup> It was endorsed unanimously by all of the participating Commonwealth countries. The Belizean Government hailed "this commitment by Commonwealth brothers" as the "greatest diplomatic breakthrough so far . . . " in its struggle with Guatemala.<sup>40</sup> Premier George Price was said to have "scored a homer on the ballfield of international politics as he made a smash-hit for Belize's case . . . ."<sup>41</sup> He was also credited with having, "catalyzed the Belize situation into the focus of world leaders concerned with the liberation struggles of the oppressed peoples of the Third World."<sup>42</sup>

In participating at the Jamaican Summit, the Belizean delegation, headed by Premier Price, had three main objectives: to muster political support for Belizean independence; to prod the British Government to bring about independence as soon as possible; and to internationalize Belize's problems within the Commonwealth forum.<sup>43</sup> All of these objectives were either met or addressed very positively. Some highly desirable consequences of the successful achievement of these objectives were also realized. Belize acquired many new committed friends who were, "ready, able and strategically placed to exploit opportunities for



advancing Belizean national interest."<sup>44</sup> More importantly, the Commonwealth of Nations was an influential group whose members shared participation in the United Nations. It was felt "inevitable that the impact of the Commonwealth Summit on the United Nations . . . will bring force to bear on those powers which continue to practice the politics of colonialism and oppression."<sup>45</sup>

Although the voice of support given by the Commonwealth of Nations in 1975 was a major success for Belize, it was only a minor hurdle in Belize's long struggle towards independence. Two years later when the Commonwealth Heads of Government met once again, they voiced similar support for Belize's independence. They did however, go one step further by establishing a Ministerial Committee among member countries to "render all practicable assistance" to Belize in its fight for independence.<sup>46</sup> The committee did not have any real power, except in the individual and collective diplomatic expertise and influence of its members which included, Barbados, Canada, Guyana, Jamaica, India, Malaysia, Nigeria and Tanzania.<sup>47</sup> Canada's participation proved to be very beneficial for Belize in that it nurtured a friendly relationship that continues to serve Belize well with large amounts of Canadian financial assistance as well as diplomatic support.

Although the Commonwealth of Nations also met in 1979, any significance that summit may have played for Belize was overshadowed by the remarkable success that Belize enjoyed at the United Nations. In a vote by the U. N. General



Assembly for Belizean independence, Belize received unanimous support from all of the Commonwealth countries as well as all of the member states of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The 1981 Summit of the Commonwealth of Nations in Melbourne, Australia, occurred just after Belize's September independence. Belize submitted an early bid for membership however, and it was approved effective Independence Day. Consequently, on 21 September 1981, Belize became the forty-fifth full member of the Commonwealth of Nations. Representatives from twenty-six of Belize's fellow Commonwealth countries shared in its Independence Day festivities.<sup>48</sup> In a statement prepared for the newest sovereign state to join her Commonwealth, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II commented:

Today marks the opening of a new chapter in the long and close relationship between Britain and Belize. Successive stages of constitutional advance resulted in the assumption by Belize of responsibility for its own internal affairs. With independence your leaders now assume full responsibilities for the Government of the new Independent State of Belize, including its relations with other countries . . . they will continue to have the full support of the Government and people of Britain, of countries of the Commonwealth and of the international community as a whole.<sup>49</sup>

At the Melbourne Summit, the Commonwealth Heads of Government adjusted their past statements of support for Belizean independence and instead emphasized and reaffirmed their full support for the new Government of Belize to maintain its territorial integrity in view of the continuing Guatemalan claim.<sup>50</sup>

The most recent summit of the Commonwealth Heads of Government occurred in New Delhi, India in November 1983. A Belizean editorial prior to the conference stated that





Belize would seek a "wider Commonwealth commitment in order to assure the British Government that pending a settlement with Guatemala . . . " the British would not be "alone in their defence of Belize against Guatemala's threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>51</sup>

The summit itself involved forty-four of the forty-eight member states. Although the countries continued to provide solid backing for Belize, there was no indication of willingness to relieve Britain of its security arrangements with Belize. Rather, the final communique of the conference "noted with concern the continuation of the political problem between Belize and Guatemala . . . , reaffirmed full support for the efforts of the Government of Belize to maintain Belize's territorial integrity . . . " and expressed satisfaction with "the continuing role of the British Government in helping to provide for the security of Belize."<sup>52</sup> In 1984, Belize continued to participate in Commonwealth forums, such as the September meetings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in London and the Commonwealth Finance Ministers in Toronto.

Belize's membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and its sub-organizations have helped greatly to legitimize its stature as an independent and sovereign nation. It has also seemed to stimulate an increase in Belize's receipt of foreign aid. Participation in annual meetings of Commonwealth Finance Ministers has helped Belize to identify its economic needs to those who could provide the help needed. The Commonwealth Development Corporation was especially



generous in providing loans for Belize's agricultural development.<sup>53</sup> In 1983 alone, it provided almost \$13 million for citrus and sugarcane production. Among the Commonwealth countries other than Britain, Canada has been especially generous to Belize. Much of the budget for the Belizean Government is in fact provided by loans from Britain, the United States, the European Economic Community (EEC), and Canada.<sup>54</sup>

Canada and Belize have enjoyed warm relations since at least the mid-1960s. Although Canadian aid to the Commonwealth Caribbean organizations has been extended to Belize for years, it has only been since Belize's independence that Belize has benefitted significantly from the generosity of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). During the Belizean Independence Day festivities, a number of visiting journalists commented on the open sewers of Belize City. CIDA sought to rectify this truthful observation by a \$60 million joint water and sewerage project for Belize City. Canada's share of this project was a \$42 million grant and a loan for almost \$16 million. At that time, it was the single largest bilateral economic cooperation project that had ever benefitted Belize.<sup>55</sup> The Belize City project began in 1982 and it is still underway. In addition, CIDA has since expressed its willingness to continue to assist Belize in other water projects.<sup>56</sup>

With regard to military assistance, the Canadian Government has provided training to members of the Belizean Defense Force (BDF). In a related area, Canada and Belize



joined ranks in opposing the 1983 military intervention in Grenada. They have indeed shared a harmonious relationship that has proven to be most advantageous for Belize. Only as recently as April 1984, did Belize fully acknowledge the scope of its Canadian relationship through the upgrading of its diplomatic relations with that country with the appointment of a High Commissioner to Canada.<sup>57</sup>

Canadian support as well as that of the entire Commonwealth membership has without a doubt contributed significantly to Belize. A comment made by the Belize Secretary of State, Vernon Courtenay, following his participation in the 1981 Melbourne Summit provides an appropriate summation of the Belize perspective. He said the significance of the support given by the Commonwealth countries was their ability to "work up massive world support, morally and physically, through the tremendous influence they exercise in worldwide organizations."<sup>58</sup> Undoubtedly, the primary worldwide organization in which Belize solicited support was the United Nations.

#### United Nations

Belize created a formal mission at the United Nations in 1975, but its diplomatic efforts to wield influence among its member states and its own participation started much earlier. In 1967, amidst ongoing mediation efforts by the United States in the Anglo-Guatemalan negotiations, the leader of the Belizean Opposition made an appearance before the U. N. De-Colonization Committee, or the Fourth Committee



as it is more commonly referred. The Opposition leader was seeking United Nations' assistance in obtaining independence for Belize. His appearance was thought premature by the PUP Government, so the Minister of Internal Affairs, Carl Rogers also appeared before the Fourth Committee to state that any intervention by the United Nations at that time would have been very inappropriate due to the mediation efforts that were in progress.<sup>59</sup> In his address, Mr. Rogers did cite "the World Body as Belize's last best hope" and he made it clear that Belize would be back asking for assistance from the U. N. if it ever became necessary or helpful to its cause.<sup>60</sup>

Another event during 1967 caused the Belizean Government to realize that if it ever did need to rely on its "last best hope" that Belize would have to do its homework and prepare its case before it ever approached the U. N. for support of independence. The 1967 event was "the impulsive attempt by the leaders of Gibraltar . . . to force a vote in the United Nations on their dispute with Spain over their rights of self determination."<sup>61</sup> Gibraltar had not done so much as to line up the support of its own Commonwealth brethren beforehand, and much to its surprise, they were split on the vote with the majority favoring Spain. Spain had achieved its success through a carefully waged propaganda campaign.

In witnessing this premature attempt by Gibraltar, Belize learned a valuable lesson in how to exercise "astute diplomatic caution."<sup>62</sup> Consequently, and as previously presented, Belize focused its earliest diplomatic initiatives





amongst smaller international bodies that could in turn echo their support at the United Nations. It was only after the success of the 1975 Commonwealth of Nations Summit in Jamaica that Belize felt prepared to begin pressing for an independence resolution from the U. N. Fourth Committee. Belize's diplomatic successes thus far had given it an "absolute guarantee against the type of diplomatic disaster which befell . . . Gibraltar."<sup>63</sup> Belize had the unanimous support of the Commonwealth and many Third World friends who were "well briefed and . . . convinced of the justice and persuasive merit of the case for Belizean independence and security."<sup>64</sup>

In December of 1974, prior to the Jamaican Commonwealth Summit, Deputy Premier Carl Rogers did appear before the U. N. Fourth Committee. This appearance was primarily an opportunity for Belize to present and update its case, and to perform some early solicitation for new supporters. No resolutions were proposed and no votes were taken.

Premier George Price delivered his 1975 State of the Nation address in September. The speech included his statement of intent to establish a permanent mission at the United Nations. This was carried out within weeks of his announcement. The new U. N. delegates began an immediate and intense lobbying effort to present the Belize case and to gain new supporters. They met with reasonable success undoubtedly due largely to the popularity of anti-colonialism issues at the U. N. On 21 November 1975, Trinidad-Tobago presented a resolution cosponsored by



sixty-three other countries to the U. N. Fourth Committee calling for Belize's independence and recognition of its rights to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity. This very first U. N. resolution was adopted in committee by a vote of 103 countries in favor, 12 countries opposed and 13 countries abstaining. Although this initial success was encouraging, Cuba was the only Latin American country that supported the resolution.

With this success in committee, the Belize delegation intensified its lobbying efforts to gain additional support for a vote in the General Assembly. On 8 December 1975, it met with similar success. Votes of support were provided by 110 countries, with 9 countries opposing, 16 countries abstaining and 8 countries not voting. Guatemala was one of those that did not vote. It walked out in protest during the vote--a practice which it would make standard in all later U. N. votes on Belize. The no votes and abstentions were dominated by Belize's Latin American neighbors, with its closest Central American neighbors providing a solid bloc in support of Guatemala.

Regardless, Belize had clearly won a resounding victory. The wisdom of its patient diplomatic initiative through the 1960s and early 1970s had met with great success. After Belize's first U. N. votes, Deputy Premier Rogers stated:

It is my distinct impression after witnessing the support of the member states of the United Nations to Belize in its quest for freedom and independence that those countries were prepared to follow the Belize question through the U. N. with much interest and



enthusiasm.<sup>65</sup>

Premier George Price was very uplifted by the initial U. N. success and in an inspiring speech to the General Assembly he pleaded:

Let Belize live, let her maintain her territory intact, and let her be sovereign and independent, able to contribute to the development of the world as a full member of the U. N.<sup>66</sup>

In 1976, one of the primary objectives of the Belize U. N. mission was to try to make a dent in the Latin American bloc that thus far had stood firmly by Guatemala. It achieved some moderate success. Peru and Venezuela, who had previously abstained from voting, offered Belize encouragement and support. Peru in particular, under its own very nationalistic government and as a participant in the Non-Aligned Movement, was inclined to support Belize. However, beyond verbal support neither of these countries changed their position of abstaining in the formal voting. Paraguay had voted a resounding no on the 1975 resolutions but it changed its position to an abstention in 1976. Panama was the one true convert and the first significant crack in the Latin American bloc. During this time Panama did have a very nationalistic leader in General Torrijos, who was actively engaged in fighting his own form of anti-colonialism in the Panama Canal negotiations with the United States. This undoubtedly influenced the complete change in Panama's position. After having voted against the 1975 resolutions, in 1976 Panama became an open advocate and spokesman for Belizean independence. The head of Belize's U. N. mission,



Assad Shoman, commented that with Panama's vote of support, the "Latin American solidarity on which Guatemala has relied for so long, is very obviously cracking."<sup>67</sup> The total vote tally for the 1976 General Assembly resolution included 115 votes in support, 8 votes in opposition and 15 abstentions. The pendulum was slowly swinging further in Belize's favor.

With Panama having fissured the Latin American bloc in 1976, the emphasis of 1977 was to make the crack even larger. Unwittingly, Guatemala helped to do this. While peaceful negotiations were underway in Washington, D. C. among Belizean, British and Guatemalan negotiators, Guatemala was positioning its army along the Belize border. Belize feared an imminent invasion and requested British reinforcements to supplement a small defensive garrison.

In August of 1977, in response to Guatemala's belligerence, the heads of government of Colombia, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela met in Bogota, Colombia, to discuss Belize with respect to the previous actions of the United Nations. This meeting was significant because it was conducted without the auspices of any official international organization and it acquired the participation of countries that previously had favored Guatemala. The Bogota meeting produced a declaration of support for Belize that was later to translate into new votes of support in the U. N.<sup>68</sup>

Premier George Price represented Belize before the U. N. Fourth Committee in 1977. In delivering his address he stated:





There is no way to reverse the march of history and the principles established by the United Nations in its long, heroic and honourable struggle against colonialism. Resolution 1514 proclaims the inalienable right of colonized peoples to self-determination. This right cannot be subject to a veto, either by the colonial power or by the claimant state.<sup>69</sup>

His comments were clearly aimed at Guatemala in order to make it obvious to the United Nations that it was in violation of basic U. N. principles.

The resolution of 1977 was largely a repeat of the previous two years' resolutions but it reflected a new sense of urgency to the situation in light of Guatemala's military threats.<sup>70</sup> In his address, Premier Price also outlined the many attempts that both Belize and Britain had made to settle the longstanding dispute with Guatemala. He also reiterated the fact that while Guatemala was supposedly working to negotiate a peaceful solution, it was also posed for war.

The Fourth Committee vote on the 1977 resolution resulted in 115 votes of support, only 5 votes of opposition and 16 countries still continuing to abstain. Mexico and Venezuela finally shifted to favorable endorsement of the resolution and several other Latin American countries shifted from no votes to abstentions. Uruguay was one of these.

Increasing Latin American support was even more forthcoming in the 1977 vote of the General Assembly. The resolution calling for Belizean independence, self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity was



supported by a record 126 countries. This group included Panama, Mexico, Venezuela, Peru and Argentina. Latin American bloc support for Guatemala had clearly disintegrated. Only four countries opposed the Belize resolution and these were Guatemala's loyal Central American neighbors of Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica.<sup>71</sup> Costa Rica's vote was primarily one reflecting solidarity with its Central American brothers rather than any real opposition to an independent Belize. The total number of countries that continued to abstain was thirteen. Momentum was indeed in favor of Belize.

On 9 December 1977, following the approval of the U. N. resolutions, the Foreign Ministers of a group of Caribbean and Latin American countries met in Kingston, Jamaica to further discuss the Belize issue. Representatives of Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Guyana, Panama, Surinam and Venezuela, and observers from Mexico and Belize participated. They issued a document known as the Kingston Declaration which reaffirmed their continued support for the past resolutions of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement. The declaration itself basically repeated the language of these past resolutions but its importance was in serving to keep the Belize issue near the forefront of international political opinion.<sup>72</sup> Premier Price's 1978 State of the Nation speech included praise for countries such as these for their efforts to fight the diplomatic battle with Belize. He stated:



We continue to win more respect and support from the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and other international bodies. We pay tribute to our fellow members of the Caribbean Community, . . . to Panama and Mexico, who are nearest to our problems, and whose courage in supporting the rights of our people sustain us in our strength.<sup>73</sup>

Upon the commencement of the thirty-third plenary session of the U. N. General Assembly, the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee that had been formed at the 1977 Commonwealth Summit, met "to help Belize and Britain find early and effective arrangements for the independence of Belize."<sup>74</sup> They also acknowledged that any land concession by Belize was not an acceptable means of settling the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. In addition, a great many of Belize's friends spoke out individually during the general debate.

The Jamaican foreign minister called for speedy implementation of the United Nations' Belize resolutions. He also deplored the external pressures and threats to which Belize had been subjected and which constituted the principle obstacle to its early accession to independence.<sup>75</sup>

The Cuban foreign minister called for an end to colonialism and he urged that the rights of self-determination and independence be respected. He also said: "Cuba energetically supports the people of Belize whose territorial integrity is threatened by the proimperialist regime of Guatemala, . . ."<sup>76</sup>

Mexico's foreign minister spoke out in strong support of the past U. N. resolutions regarding Belize. He stated that they were "the best legal basis for any solution to the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute."<sup>77</sup> He further stated that his



country would "continue to participate in any consultations guided by the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and of good neighbourliness and brotherhood that link Mexico and Guatemala."<sup>78</sup>

The foreign minister from Trinidad-Tobago "reaffirmed his government's support for Belizean self-determination and independence in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and recognition of Belize's territorial integrity."<sup>79</sup> He also told the General Assembly that his Government was concerned over pressures on Belize to cede any part of its territory as the price of its independence.

The issue of Belize being under pressure to cede land was brought up by so many of its supporters during 1978 because not only was Guatemala insisting that Belize do so, but the British negotiators had also suggested it during some early negotiations in 1978. Belize's adamant refusal to even consider this was clearly put forth during those negotiations and in Deputy Premier Rogers' address to the U. N. Fourth Committee in 1978. He maintained that "territorial integrity for Belize was an absolute non-negotiable principle in seeking a just settlement."<sup>80</sup> He also urged support for an updated resolution which separated the issue of independence for Belize from the outcome of any negotiations between Britain and Guatemala. This change simply reflected the Memorandum of Understanding that the Belizean Government and Opposition had signed with Britain in July of 1978. One other change in Deputy Premier Rogers' appearance before the Fourth Committee in 1978 was that he was joined





for the first time by a delegation that included members of both Belize's Government and Opposition. The Opposition's members included Manuel Esquivel, the current Prime Minister of Belize, but he was then only a political newcomer.

The Fourth Committee vote on the new Belize resolution was favorable. With Panama cosponsoring the resolution, it passed with 118 votes in favor, 4 votes against and 12 abstentions. The General Assembly vote which soon followed on 6 December 1978 was a resounding victory. For the very first time, the Belize independence resolution faced no votes of opposition.

Before the vote was taken, the Guatemalan representative addressed the General Assembly. "He said that the United Nations had placed more emphasis on the right to independence for a colonial territory than the territorial integrity of a sovereign member state."<sup>81</sup> His comments seemed to have anticipated the outcome he foresaw in the U. N. votes. Belize received the unanimous support of the Commonwealth of Nations, the unanimous support of the Non-Aligned Movement, and an overwhelming majority of support from the member states of the OAS. One of Belize's new supporters was Costa Rica. The vote itself was 128 in favor, 0 opposed and 12 abstentions. The abstainers still included the United States. However, it was thought that neither it nor any of the other "uncommitted" countries could continue to remain uncommitted over Belize in view of the consistent U. N. resolutions calling for Belizean independence.

Because of Belize's victory at the United Nations in



1978, the year 1979 was one initially marked by renewed dedication to negotiations among Guatemala, Britain and Belize. At one point, the vice-president of Guatemala stated that Britain and Guatemala had finally resolved their dispute over Belize through an agreement that called for the cession of land by Belize. His comments were quickly disputed by other Guatemalan Government officials as well as the Government of Britain. No settlement had been reached and even if one had, had it required the cession of land, it would never have been approved by Belize.<sup>82</sup>

The U. N. votes in 1979 were similar to 1978 except that in the Fourth Committee as well as in the General Assembly there were not any votes of opposition. The list of abstainers had also dwindled to seven.

One significant new vote of support was that of Nicaragua. Since the previous U. N. vote, the Sandinista Revolution had succeeded in ousting the Somoza Regime and the Sandinistas had come out firmly in support of Belize. They did in fact cosponsor the Belize resolution in the Fourth Committee.<sup>83</sup> El Salvador also shifted its vote of support to the Belize resolutions.<sup>84</sup> Guatemala was very quickly becoming totally isolated with its intransigent attitude towards Belize.

In early 1980, the Belizean magazine, Brukdown, interviewed Rafael Castillo Valdez, the Guatemalan Foreign Minister. He was asked how he accounted for Guatemala's loss of support in the United Nations by other Latin American countries. He denied that Guatemala had lost any



support. He stated: "In matters that are the vital concern of the Guatemalan people we have the support and respect of those people. That is what is important to us."<sup>85</sup> He was also asked why it appeared that Guatemala stood alone among the nations of the world in its attitude towards Belize. He stated that he disagreed that Guatemala stood alone. Mr. Valdez clearly did not want to face the obvious answers to these questions.

In 1980, Belize sought once again to present its case to the United Nations. Although each one of the previous four years' resolutions had been approved, they had yet to prompt a final settlement of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. In accordance with the resolutions, negotiations had been conducted. They had been conducted at many different diplomatic levels and in many different places but no workable agreement had yet proven acceptable to all of the parties.

Despite the thus far seemingly insignificant results of U. N. resolutions for independence, Belize was persistent in continuing to use the U. N. General Assembly. There was one country in particular that Belize had yet to draw into the Belizean court and its lack of support for Belize was still seen as a very positive factor for Guatemala.

The United States had consistently abstained from voting on the U. N. Belize resolutions. Although President Jimmy Carter voiced support for the cause of the Belizean people in 1978, the United States' U. N. delegation had remained noncommittal through the 1970s. It did appear in early 1980, however, that the United States was finally



going to vote in favor of Belizean independence during the thirty-fifth plenary session of the United Nations. Consequently, Belize was optimistic as it prepared to fight one more round at the United Nations.

As expected, the United States did finally vote for the Belize resolution in the U. N. Fourth Committee. Upon doing so the U. S. representative issued a press release which stated:

My Government favors the principle of self determination embodied in this resolution and those of previous years. Our abstention in the past was for the purpose of encouraging a negotiated solution, and did not relate to the merits of the dispute. We are now convinced that Belizean independence should not be delayed.<sup>86</sup> We have therefore voted in favor of the resolution.

The total vote in the Fourth Committee resulted in 130 in favor, 1 against and 8 abstentions. In the General Assembly, 139 countries voted in favor, none voted against and 7 still abstained.<sup>87</sup> The resolution in 1980 was basically a repeat draft of previous resolutions, however, it did have a few significant differences. Part of the resolution declared that, "Belize should become an independent State before the conclusion of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly."<sup>88</sup> This aspect of the resolution gave the attainment of independence a very definite timetable. With Britain having endorsed the resolution, as it had all the others, it committed itself to grant Belize its independence before the end of 1981, in spite of no settlement of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. It also called on Britain to convene a constitutional conference and to continue to provide security for the territorial integrity of Belize.





One of the repeat provisions of the resolution was for the continuance of negotiations to reach a peaceful settlement of the territorial dispute. These negotiations were pursued earnestly in early 1981 in hopes of Belize being able to achieve independence in a state of peace and goodwill with its Guatemalan neighbors. Although there was some early hope of this achievement after the March 1981 Heads of Agreement, these hopes were quickly shattered when Guatemala continued to press for the cession of land. Despite the lack of a final settlement, Belize was able to celebrate its first Independence Day in 1981 as the British had promised.

On 25 September 1981, only four days after its independence, Belize was admitted as the 156th member of the United Nations, just in time to participate in the thirty-sixth plenary session of the General Assembly. The President of the United Nations offered encouragement and a warm welcome to the U. N.'s newest member. He stated:

In welcoming the delegation of Belize to our midst, I know that I am expressing the sentiments of this Assembly when I say that it is my sincere hope that outstanding problems will soon be resolved in a spirit of peaceful cooperation, thus strengthening international peace and security and assuring the people of Belize future happiness, prosperity and peaceful and friendly cooperation with all its neighbors.<sup>89</sup>

In his speech before the U. N. General Assembly for the first time as a member, Prime Minister Price addressed the unresolved dispute that continued to trouble Belize as it tried to live in peace. He stated:

There is a threat to this peace because a neighbour to which we extend the hand of friendship and offer of economic regional co-operation has not responded yet to our invitation. Yet, we stand ready to pursue the



formula for peace agreed upon by the United Kingdom, Guatemala and Belize in a determined endeavour to search for a peaceful solution of the dispute between the United Kingdom and Guatemala, without prejudice to our sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>90</sup>

Belize's attainment of independence and membership in the U. N. did not stop the need for it to continue to press its diplomatic initiative since the Guatemalan territorial claim and military threat continued to rob Belize of any real freedom. Belize's focus in the U. N. simply changed from one of seeking independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity to one of seeking primarily territorial integrity.

In August of 1982, Belize filed a formal protest with the U. N. over a violation of its border by Guatemalan military officers. After outlining the facts of the incident, the protest note concluded: "We wish to record our strong protest of the violation of Belizean territory and request that it be circulated to all members of the U. N."<sup>91</sup> It was assumed that by bringing incidents such as these to the attention of the U. N., that Belize could help to further castigate and alienate Guatemala in the world's eye.

The thirty-seventh plenary session of the U. N. began only a few months after this incident and once again Belize spoke before the General Assembly. Deputy Prime Minister Carl Rogers delivered the speech which outlined the continuing efforts by Belize and Britain to resolve the age old dispute with Guatemala. He further reiterated Guatemala's belligerence in refusing to recognize Belize as an independent state or to even negotiate directly with it. In an



interview with Mr. Rogers after his return from New York, he was asked about Belize's continued use of international forums. He stated:

Belize must always be on the alert. Belize must never lower its guard. We need the support of the nations of the world to understand our cause because the Guatemalans have never dropped their guard . . . . We must keep our support lined up at all times because . . . when we are talking about recognition we are talking about the rest of the world recognizing us and Guatemala not recognizing us. We must keep the rest of the world on our side.<sup>92</sup>

Mr. Rogers was also asked what would be Belize's next move. He responded:

Our next move is to participate fully in the U. N. I went there to explain Belize's position as we see it, the view of Belizeans; . . . we want to be clearly understood on each issue as they affect us and as we see them. Belize will have to have a larger delegation in order to deal with problems that come up at the U. N. The U. N. is where things happen.<sup>93</sup>

In May of 1983, Prime Minister Price visited U. S. President Ronald Reagan in Washington, D. C. During this trip he also went to New York where he met with the U. N. Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, as well as the U. S. Ambassador to the U. N., Jeanne Kirkpatrick. All of these meetings and discussions were to discuss Belize's problems and the Guatemalan situation. The diplomatic initiative that Belize had begun in the early 1960s had clearly not yet ended.

Belize registered another protest at the U. N. in June 1983 for another Guatemalan border violation. This particular violation involved the pursuit of a Guatemalan by the Guatemalan Army across the Belizean border where the victim was brutally murdered. Belize filed the "strongest



possible protest" for a "callous and barbarous act" which constituted a clear violation of its territory.<sup>94</sup>

In his October 1983 speech before the U. N. General Assembly, Deputy Prime Minister Rogers reminded the world body of this incident and described it as characteristic of the Guatemalan regime. His statements referred to Guatemala's "intransigent attitude" and the persistence of its position which constituted a continuing threat to one of the few remaining places in Central America in which there was peace.<sup>95</sup>

Carl Rogers' most recent appearance at the U. N. occurred during October 1984 when he addressed the thirty-ninth plenary session of the General Assembly. His remarks were delivered some time after a speech by Guatemala's Foreign Minister, Fernando Andrade. During Mr. Andrade's speech, he told the General Assembly that his Government along with representatives of the United Kingdom and Belize would continue to search for "a just and honourable solution" to their problems, but that his Government still refused to recognize the independence of Belize.<sup>96</sup>

When Carl Rogers spoke he urged Guatemala to move away from its "archaic and anachronistic attitudes of the past" and to "abandon the unreal and unproductive fiction" of denying Belize independence.<sup>97</sup> He also spoke of Belize's willingness to negotiate with Guatemala in good faith and with determination to find a solution to their problems, but that first, Guatemala "must recognize the independence and territorial integrity of Belize, none of which are for negotia-





tion."<sup>98</sup>

In other U. N. actions of 1984, Belize's U. N. Ambassador, Robert Leslie, voted approval for a slate of candidates that would represent Latin America and the Caribbean during the thirty-ninth plenary session. This slate of candidates included Guatemala for a vice-presidential position. In voting for the candidates, Ambassador Leslie filed a reservation which stated:

The decision of my delegation should not be interpreted as approval of Guatemala's international posture, nor a comment on its record at the U. N., nor acceptance of its persistent nonrecognition of the existence of the independent state of Belize within our own land and sea boundaries, nor of its claim to our territory. It should rather be seen as a sign of our solidarity with the Latin American group. And it should be interpreted by the General Assembly and Guatemala as another good faith contribution of Belize to the dialogue for peace and cooperation between our two countries and in our troubled region.<sup>99</sup>

Although Belize's U. N. participation has been most notable in the General Assembly and in the Fourth Committee prior to its independence, Belize has also fully involved itself in many forums within the auspices of the United Nations, particularly since its 1981 independence. Much of this participation has yielded tangible benefits for Belize, but, it has also served to keep Belize involved with other countries with which it could continue to press for support in its diplomatic fight. There are many examples of Belize's participation in these smaller U. N. forums. One of these was Belize's attendance at the June 1982 meeting of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee.<sup>100</sup> From this meeting it was able to obtain financial assistance from



the U. N. Development Program. During July of 1983 Belize sent representatives to the meeting of the U. N. World Food Council.<sup>101</sup> In January 1984, meetings with members of the U. N. International Children's Fund (UNICEF) resulted in a four year extension of existing educational assistance programs.<sup>102</sup> Within the past year alone, Belize has sent representatives to the U. N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Sugar Conference, a regional meeting of the U. N. Food and Agricultural Organization, and a meeting of the U. N. International Conference on Population.<sup>103</sup>

Although these few examples are far from being a complete record of Belize's participation, they clearly illustrate the fact that the tiny nation of Belize has become a new international actor. Belize's U. N. record of participation alone makes this indisputable, but it becomes even more so when observed in conjunction with its successful participation in CARICOM, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth of Nations.

### Other International Organizations and Nations

#### Economic Commission for Latin America

In addition to its membership in the international forums previously discussed, Belize also maintained either membership or association with several other organizations. One of the first international organizations which Belize joined was the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA). Belize was accepted as an associate member in 1961 by a vote of seventeen to four, but it did not become a very active



participant.<sup>104</sup> In 1975, at a meeting in Trinidad, Belize did take advantage of the audience that its membership afforded it in order to plead its case for independence. Belize's appearance followed closely after its success at the Jamaican Summit of the Commonwealth of Nations. In addressing the group of Latin American countries, Premier George Price brought up the Guatemalan issue. He stressed that it was "not an issue in which might is right."<sup>105</sup> He further emphasized that the people of Belize were "innocent victims of an unacceptable claim . . . by a neighbouring country."<sup>106</sup> Although many Latin American countries were perhaps sympathetic to Belize, as a group they were faithful in their support of the Guatemalan position. It was only among the recently independent Caribbean members of ECLA that Belize received backing.

#### Organization of American States

Belize faced similar reactions in the Organization of American States (OAS). Belize is not a member of the OAS; however, it has been a frequent observer at OAS meetings, and the Belizean-Guatemalan dispute has also been a frequent agenda item. Guatemala's efforts to use the OAS forum to renounce British acts of aggression in 1972 backfired when Premier Price and the Jamaican OAS representative waged a successful struggle that led to Guatemala's withdrawal of its resolution.<sup>107</sup>

At a July 1978 meeting of the OAS in Washington, D. C., United States President Jimmy Carter delivered the



opening speech. In this address he drew attention to the unsettled Belize-Guatemala dispute by referring to the settlement of the Panama Canal issue and indicating that it "should be a good sign that other disputes in our hemisphere can also be settled peacefully . . . ."108 He went on to mention the Belize-Guatemala situation specifically.

Another OAS meeting when Belize was highlighted occurred only weeks after the U. N. victory of 1980. A group of member states presented a resolution whereby the OAS would add its endorsement to the successful U. N. resolution that called for Belize's independence. It passed overwhelmingly and in so doing, delivered a second major diplomatic defeat to Guatemala in international forums within a period of less than three weeks. In responding to the OAS vote, Premier Price stated:

It is now crystal clear that world opinion in favour of Belize has grown to the extent that the O.A.S. has by majority vote come out in favour for the independence of Belize and a rejection of the Guatemala claim . . . . Belize has always extended the hand of friendship to Guatemala. We now ask the people of Guatemala to support and accept this world opinion.<sup>109</sup>

Almost one year later, as Belize prepared for its independence celebrations, it submitted its application for OAS membership. In October, prior to its application's consideration, Belize withdrew it due to impending Guatemalan objections that would have prevented its approval. The OAS Charter itself indicates that if any extra-continental country, such as the United Kingdom, is having a territorial dispute with a member state, such as Guatemala, and that territorial dispute has not been resolved through





peaceful means, then the territory under dispute, such as Belize, cannot be considered for membership by the General Assembly of the OAS.<sup>110</sup> Although Belize could not be considered for membership, it did receive approval in an October OAS vote for participation as an observer in the General Assembly meeting scheduled for December 1981 at St. Lucia.<sup>111</sup>

Membership in the OAS remains illusive for Belize. It has suggested that the Charter be amended to eliminate the power of Guatemala's objections, especially in view of the overwhelming support that Belize has maintained. Despite this, the status quo still exists. In his October 1984 address to the U. N. General Assembly, Carl Rogers used the opportunity to chastise the OAS membership for their "passive acceptance" of Belize's exclusion from their organization.<sup>112</sup> He indicated that this ran counter to these countries protestations of friendship and regional cooperation and that it contributed to the slowing down of Belize's development process.<sup>113</sup>

#### International Monetary Fund and World Bank

During the time that Belize submitted its bid for OAS membership, it also requested to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or World Bank).<sup>114</sup> Belize was represented at the thirty-sixth annual Joint Meeting of the IMF and World Bank in October 1981 when they considered its application. Belize was formally admitted in February 1982



and it immediately went to work on requesting World Bank assistance.<sup>115</sup>

Two different IMF/World Bank teams visited Belize during 1982 to study its financial needs and requests. Their findings were evidently sufficient justification for Belize to receive a \$5.3 million loan which was signed at the World Bank headquarters in Washington, D. C. during Prime Minister Price's May 1983 visit to the United States. Earlier in 1983, an IMF advisor was assigned to the Belize Ministry of Finance for a one year study to further evaluate Belize's finances. In a very short time Belize has most definitely profited from its membership in the IMF and World Bank. Its gains are only partially measured in dollars however. Belize biggest gain was perhaps in the international prestige and recognition that its membership represented. Belize had definitely arrived.

#### European Economic Community

Belize's colonial status up until 1981 automatically included it in the European Economic Community (EEC) grouping of Overseas Colonies and Territories (OCT). As an OCT, Belize was eligible for economic assistance from the EEC through the European Development Fund (EDF) in accordance with the provisions of the first and second Lome Conventions. Although eligible for assistance, the amount afforded members of the OCT group was minimal. Upon attaining independence, however, Belize status switched to that of one of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and



the aid afforded ACP countries was substantial both in dollar terms, trade privileges and development assistance.

Belize was formally included as the fifty-eighth member of the ACP grouping in early 1982. This provided it with preferential trade status with the countries of the European Economic Community. Additionally, Belize was eligible to receive aid from the EDF. By June of 1982, EDF aid totaling \$7.5 million in loans and grants had been approved.<sup>116</sup>

In an effort to shore up this support and to solicit more foreign trade, the Belizean Minister of Natural Resources toured several of the member countries of the EEC shortly after this generous assistance was committed.<sup>117</sup> He visited the headquarters of the EEC in Brussels, Belgium, as well as the United Kingdom, West Germany and France. Ever since Belize gained its independence, it has maintained a diplomatic mission at the EEC headquarters. It was in fact one of the first seven diplomatic missions that Belize created.<sup>118</sup>

Apart from continued assistance of the EEC, such as an education program approved in March of 1984, Belize has also enjoyed good relations with most of the member states. Many of them were represented at Belize's independence ceremonies in 1981 and many of them maintain diplomatic relations with Belize.

France is one member of the EEC that seems to have taken a particular interest in Belize. A French warship visited Belize for a four day port visit in June 1982.<sup>119</sup> Later during that year, a French delegation visited Belize



to discuss joint agricultural cooperation.<sup>120</sup> As a further reflection of their continuing warm relations, in July 1983, Belize upgraded its diplomatic mission to France by appointing a non-resident ambassador.<sup>121</sup>

#### Other Organizations and Nations

Upon attaining independence, Belize joined a number of other international organizations, although most of them were of a special interest nature. These groups included the International Postal Union, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Labor Organization.<sup>122</sup>

The Belize Foreign Ministry has increased its work load substantially since 1981. At its independence, Belize hosted representatives of sixty-one nations. Many of them also sought to establish diplomatic relations. Most of these nations had already established some kinship ties with Belize through their joint association in international forums. This was especially true of Belize's Commonwealth brethren and EEC supporters. Since the initial surge of applications, others have also been received. Two of the most recent countries to establish diplomatic relations with Belize were Pakistan in April 1984 and Japan in June 1984.<sup>123</sup> As of October 1984 a total of twenty-six countries had established diplomatic relations with Belize and eight others maintained consular associations.<sup>124</sup>

As a small country, Belize is obviously limited in the human and financial resources available to it for the maintenance of an extensive diplomatic network abroad. Limited





diplomatic resources is a phenomenon not unique to Belize. It is a characteristic common to virtually all small countries, including small countries much larger than Belize.<sup>125</sup> (Among small countries really only Cuba is an exception to limited diplomatic resources.) Belize has managed to expand its seven original diplomatic missions in some cases by requiring its ambassadors to perform double duty. As an example, the resident High Commissioner to the United Kingdom is also the non-resident ambassador to France. Similarly, the resident ambassador to the United States is also the non-resident High Commissioner to Canada.

These new and expanding international linkages are most definitely an indicator of Belize's achievement of international stature. Its struggle to "arrive" however, has not been an easy one. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in Belize's relations with its Central American neighbors and the United States. They were the last to finally side with Belize at the United Nations, but, since shifting their support, they (except Guatemala) have become some of Belize's most ardent supporters.

#### Latin American Nations

Although Belize is geographically located on the mainland of Central America, its history, culture and politics have been much more in line with the island Caribbean nations, particularly those with similar British origins. Because of its differences, and in spite of its location, until very recently, Belize had generally been excluded from



most inter-American activities. Much of the reasoning behind this state of affairs rests with Belize itself. As a British Crown Colony during most of the twentieth century, it simply did not desire nor attempt to interact with its Latin neighbors. The successful 1940s White Book campaign by Guatemala also undoubtedly continued to bias the feelings of the Latin American countries with regard to their own affairs with Guatemala's wayward province. Consequently, when Belize began to press its diplomatic initiative in the 1970s, it had to contend with virtually unanimous Latin American opposition to its independence struggle.

Although one of Belize's earliest memberships in an international organization was in ECLA, it was never a very active participant. The early 1960s, when Belize joined ECLA, was also the time when the PUP Government was successful in achieving self-government from Britain as a step towards independence. In realizing that it was the unresolved Guatemalan issue that would separate Belize from its next step in constitutional advancement, it began a diplomatic initiative among its Latin American neighbors.

In 1965, Premier George Price toured Central America and Mexico where he was reportedly well received by the press and the Heads of Governments.<sup>126</sup> He was especially well received in Mexico where its new President-elect gave Belize a pledge of support. The President-elect stated:

The historical links which unite us, the ever increasingly friendly relations and the observance of the principles of international co-existence--which is defended by Mexico with such zeal and perseverance--are reason enough to accentuate our solidarity for the noble people



of Belize in their quest for their liberty and independence.<sup>127</sup>

Two years later, while visiting Guatemala, the Mexican President also spoke out in favor of Belize's right to self-determination.<sup>128</sup>

This early support from Mexico, while undoubtedly appreciated by Belize, was partially proffered for ulterior motives. In opposing the Guatemalan position, Mexico was also opposing the United States position on the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. During the 1960s, it seemed Mexico intentionally chose positions at odds with the United States in order to demonstrate its own independence and non-reliance on its larger northern neighbor. Mexico's support of Belize was also seen as a way of increasing the willingness of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries to open their doors to Mexico as a new trading partner.<sup>129</sup> These new opportunities undoubtedly benefitted Mexico financially and politically as it sought to broaden its own base of international relations.<sup>130</sup>

Despite any ulterior motives in its support, Mexico did continue to favor Belize. In 1974, Mexico participated in a forum of Latin American leaders at Guyana. One of the outcomes of that meeting was a declaration of support for the Guatemalan position in the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. Mexico refused to endorse the declaration.

Although Mexico did maintain its verbal support of Belize, once Belize sought to internationalize its plight in the United Nations, Mexico did not initially vote in favor



of the U. N. resolutions. It was not until 1977, after two previous votes, that Mexico's vote reflected the rhetoric it had long espoused. Mexico's reluctance to lend early voting support was largely attributed to its faithfulness to Guatemala and the Latin American bloc. By 1977, this simply was not enough. Once Mexico did come out openly in support of Belize, it did so in full force. Prior to the U. N. vote of 1977, Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo issued a clear declaration of support for the right of the people of Belize to self-determination.<sup>131</sup>

Through the remainder of the 1970s, Mexico was a staunch supporter of Belizean independence, and its support undoubtedly influenced other countries to shift their allegiance as well. It is representative of Mexico's efforts on behalf of Belize to note that it cosponsored both the 1980 Fourth Committee and General Assembly resolutions that finally brought Belize to independence. The New Belize reported in December 1980 that, "to have our big neighbour take such a positive and dynamic stand on behalf of our independence, our territorial integrity, our security is indeed an important step forward."<sup>132</sup>

At Belize's Independence Day, Mexico's delegation of eight was one of the larger contingents to join the ceremonies. Three days later in the U. N., Mexico was the first country to officially recognize the U. N.'s newest member. In addressing the General Assembly, Mexico's Foreign Minister, Jorge Castaneda stated:





. . . for Mexico, the independence of Belize is an example of how through the organizations that the international community has set to live in peace and harmony, it is possible to implement the most noble principles and in particular that which embodies the foreign policy of my government, the free determination of the people.<sup>133</sup>

In January 1982, Mexico and Belize signed a five year renewable cultural exchange agreement. It was a far reaching exchange that encompassed everything from library exchange programs and copyright protection to supporting sporting competitions.<sup>134</sup> Several months later, Mexico and Belize signed another agreement whereby Mexico agreed to provide electrical power to some of the Belize border areas.<sup>135</sup> Another example of Mexico's assistance occurred in December 1982 with the grand opening and dedication of a new Technical Agricultural High School. Mexico built and paid for the school as a gift for Belize.<sup>136</sup> The year 1982 alone was most definitely a good year in Mexican-Belizean relations.

As Mexico worked in 1983 with its other Latin American neighbors on a peace solution for Central America, it sought to keep Belize informed of its efforts. In fact, diplomatic representatives from Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela called on Prime Minister Price to seek his endorsement of the Cancun Declaration for Peace in Central America. The document condemned the use of force as a means of settling disputes and it called for adherence to the principles of non-intervention, self-determination, and sovereignty. Belize offered its full endorsement and Prime Minister Price expressed his sincere appreciation to the countries' diplo-



mats for their interest in keeping Belize apprised of their actions.<sup>137</sup>

During this same visit, Mexico and Venezuela also presented Belize with agreements that renewed their energy cooperation programs. This program was one in which these oil rich countries were providing oil to their fellow Latin American countries at reduced prices.

Mexican-Belizean relations remain mutually beneficial today. It is perhaps particularly helpful for Belize that Mexico, although friendly with both Guatemala and Belize, does favor the Belize side of their continuing dispute. This cannot help but have some restraining effect on Guatemala's ideas about ever actively pursuing a military solution to its claims.

Even though Mexico was one of the first Latin American countries to offer Belize vocal support, Panama was the first Latin American country to lend its diplomatic support at the U. N. In 1976, Panama came out openly in favor of Belizean independence. Its bold and courageous move was to serve as the catalyst for other Latin American countries to relinquish their outdated support for Guatemala. Panama's support was unwavering through the remainder of Belize's independence struggle. It consistently cosponsored U. N. Fourth Committee and General Assembly resolutions, as well as speaking out in other regional forums on Belize's behalf. Upon the establishment of Belize's independent status, Panama was the first country to establish resident ambassadorial level diplomatic relations. Since then, Panama has



offered some assistance towards the training of the Belizean Defense Force.<sup>138</sup> Most recently, in July of 1984, Panama and Belize signed a cultural exchange agreement to further their close relations.<sup>139</sup>

The basis for the Panama-Belize relationship seems to have been largely due to a close personal affection between Panama's General Torrijos and Belize's George Price. During Premier Price's diplomatic initiative in Central America, General Torrijos reportedly gained a keen sense of admiration for Premier Price and the plight of his people and country. Price in turn was fully supportive and admiring of the then ongoing negotiations between Panama and the United States over the Panama Canal. Upon General Torrijos' untimely death in a plane crash on 31 July 1981, George Price took time away from his busy preparations for independence to attend the funeral. The following year on the anniversary of General Torrijos' death, Premier Price held a memorial mass in Belize to honor him.<sup>140</sup> The warm relations between Panama and Belize continue today, most recently exemplified by Prime Minister Price's attendance at the October 1984 inauguration of Panama's new President Barletta.<sup>141</sup>

Belize's relationships with the South American countries has remained very limited. A few of them did become outspoken advocates of Belizean independence during the 1970s U. N. struggle, but very little long term interest in Belize ever developed. Belize participates with these countries in various international forums and they recognize it



as a sovereign state, yet, due to such limited contact very few of them maintain any type of diplomatic relations. Colombia, Argentina and Venezuela were some of the earliest U. N. converts after Panama broke the Latin American bloc support for Guatemala. It was also these four countries and Brazil, that were the only Latin origin South American countries represented at Belize's Independence Day.<sup>142</sup> (The only other South American countries in attendance were Surinam and Guyana.)

As Venezuela tries to play an ever increasing leadership role in the Caribbean basin its support for Belize has remained strong. It continues to provide oil at reduced prices to Belize through its joint oil assistance program with Mexico. It also signed two different declarations along with Belize during August 1982.<sup>143</sup> The heads of government attending the inauguration of Salvador Jorge Blanco as President of the Dominican Republic and those attending the inauguration of Belazario Betancourt as President of Colombia, signed documents supporting the goals of the United Nations and the principles of the non-use of force in settling disputes.

Belizean-Colombian relations have basically been limited to mutual representation at each others installations of new Governments. Colombia has been active in Central American peace proposals and consequently, it has been more frequently represented at various forums of Central American and Caribbean nations which include Belize. For example, Colombia was the only South American participant in a meet-





ing of Central American and Caribbean Foreign Ministers in Costa Rica during October of 1982. Prime Minister Price did attend a ceremony in June 1983 at Cartegena de las Indias, Colombia, marking the 450th anniversary of the founding of that city. He was one of twenty visiting representatives of other countries that joined together during their visit to Colombia to sign a declaration which called for "dialogue in order to overcome the existing antagonism among American States so as to remove the threat of war."<sup>144</sup> Prime Minister Price stated that the signing was conducted among a "fellowship of Americans who desire peace and progress."<sup>145</sup> Interestingly, Guatemala was one of Belize's fellow signers.

Belize's relations with Argentina never had much time to develop before the Falkland's War of 1982. When Belize sided with Britain, Argentina shifted its support back to the Guatemalan position in the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute.

Relations with Belize's Central American neighbors had been fairly limited but relatively congenial through the years. During Belize's diplomatic push of the 1960s and 1970s most of these countries did not oppose Belize's fundamental objectives, yet they sided with Guatemala in the territorial dispute. As other Latin American countries recognized the validity of Belize's rights, and as they saw the entire Belize issue rise to international dimensions, they slowly shifted their position. The New Belize referred to the Latin American countries as being embarrassed by Guatemala's claim to Belize and it indicated they refused to continue to go along quietly and tacitly supporting



Guatemala while its own expansionistic ambitions threatened the peace of the Americas.<sup>146</sup>

Costa Rica was the first traditional Central American country to support Belize's independence. Prior to the 1977 U. N. resolution, Costa Rica met with a group of countries to discuss the Belize problem. It was not until 1979, however, that Costa Rica actually voted in favor of Belizean independence and openly opposed Guatemala's territorial claim. Costa Rica continued to support the Belize resolutions in 1980 and sent a representative to Belize's September 1981 independence. Only a few months later, Costa Rica and Belize announced that they would cooperate in health matters. Costa Rica was to provide doctors for teaching as well as practicing in Belize, and it opened Costa Rican medical facilities for the treatment of Belizeans.<sup>147</sup> In March 1982, Costa Rica also became the first Central American country to establish ambassadorial level diplomatic relations. As Central America's only two true democracies--in political practice as well as governmental structure--Costa Rica and Belize have continued to share good relations and mutual concern over the turmoil within Central America.

Nicaragua was undergoing its own violent internal turmoil during the height of the Belize struggle in the 1970s and 1980s. Under the Somoza regime, Nicaragua was an ardent defender of the Guatemalan territorial claim, yet, the Sandinistas, who opposed him were very sympathetic to the Belizean cause. Prior to the Sandinista's successful



August 1979 revolution, Premier George Price had nurtured the Sandinistas' support for Belize such that upon their attainment of power, they shifted the Nicaraguan position dramatically in favor of Belize.<sup>148</sup> During the 1979 U. N. votes on Belize, Nicaragua cosponsored the resolutions calling for Belizean independence. It also attended the Belize Independence ceremonies with a contingent of twelve people. That number was second only to the United States.<sup>149</sup> Out of mutual respect and support, George Price also attended the first three annual anniversary celebrations of the Sandinista Revolution. Belizean teachers were also provided to Nicaragua to assist in a literacy campaign for Nicaragua's English speaking areas.<sup>150</sup>

In the year that followed Belize's participation in the 1982 Sandinista Revolution Anniversary celebration, Belizean expressions of support for the Nicaraguan Government stopped. Belize has also not participated in any later celebrations.<sup>151</sup> While some attribute this to effective pressure from the United States, the realities of a changing political situation in Nicaragua must also have effected the Belizean Government's sentiments.

Belize's relations with El Salvador have remained very limited. El Salvador did eventually support Belize at the United Nations and it sent a delegation to Belize's Independence festivities. Belize, in turn, sent a representative to the inauguration of President Duarte in July of 1984. Presently, many Salvadoran refugees and expatriates have moved to Belize. The Belizean Government has offered some



aid to the displaced peasant refugees in the way of social services and land. The group referred to as expatriates, however, are generally of a higher income level and they have relocated Salvadoran businesses, bought into Belizean businesses or created new ones. Consequently, among many native Belizeans the new and expanding Salvadoran presence is not an altogether welcomed one.<sup>152</sup>

Honduras also eventually supported Belize at the United Nations although it was the last of the Central American countries to do so. It also sent a representative to Belize in September 1981 for Independence Day. In March of 1984, Honduras took the initiative to strengthen its relations with Belize. Upon the invitation of Honduran President Roberto Suazo Cordova, Prime Minister Price visited Honduras. They discussed a wide range of issues which included establishing trade and cultural accords.<sup>153</sup> Honduras also expressed solidarity with Belize in its dispute with Guatemala and it promised to support Belize's entrance into the Central American Common Market and the Central American Economic Integration Bank.<sup>154</sup> The two countries did participate in a joint Caribbean pavillion with the Dominican Republic at the 1984 World's Fair in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Overall, Belize's relations with its Latin American neighbors, and particularly its Central American neighbors, are sorely lacking in substance. This is largely attributed to Guatemala's continuing military threat, its still prevalent influence and the Central American turbulence. Most of Belize's foreign aid comes from outside the region as well





as most of its trade. Belize would apparently like to be more fully integrated into regional cooperative arrangements, especially those that would afford Belize economic advantages. It strongly supported the Kissinger Commission proposal for the formation of a Central American Development Organization.<sup>155</sup> Belize would also like to be included in other existing Latin American forums that presently exclude it. On the other hand, Belize has refused to join some Central American organizations, such as the Central American Democratic Community and the Central American Defense Council (CONDECA), despite the urgings of the United States.<sup>156</sup> Belize most definitely still has work to do in expanding and strengthening its relations in Latin America. Its inability to do so in most cases, rest with the continuing Guatemalan predicament. Its reluctance to do so in other cases rests with the paradox of remaining an independent country of Anglican origins, traditions and language in the midst of an ever encroaching Latin influence.

#### United States

The United States' involvement in the Belize territory, extends back to the nineteenth century, although its early involvement was primarily through Britain. An examination of Belize-United States relations since the early 1960s--during Belize's early fight for independence--provides a more valuable view of their relationship.

In the early 1960s, the Belizean Government worked vigorously towards a negotiated settlement of the Anglo-



Guatemalan dispute. Negotiations were held in 1962 in Puerto Rico and again in 1965 in Miami, Florida. The United States' only involvement in these negotiations was in their having been held on U. S. territory; this, however, was soon to change. Following the failure of the Miami negotiations, Belize, Britain and Guatemala decided to request that the United States mediate their dispute. President Johnson agreed to their request and appointed an international attorney, Mr. Bethuel Webster, to act as the mediator. Mr. Webster took almost three years to complete his study of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute and to produce his report, which took the form of a draft treaty between Britain and Guatemala.<sup>157</sup> He presented his proposals 26 April 1968.<sup>158</sup>

The Belizean Government was quick to voice its opposition to the Webster proposals due to their suggestion of the "gross erosion" of Belizean sovereignty.<sup>159</sup> The Government did however distribute the Webster report throughout Belize in order to gain public opinion. "The response was a complete rejection."<sup>160</sup> The proposal itself called largely for the incorporation of Belize into Guatemala. The United Kingdom, finding this just as unacceptable as Belize, joined with it in rejecting the proposals. In an address to the Belize House of Representatives, Premier George Price explained the reason for Belize's rejection. He stated:

The proposals create areas of obligatory conditions for consultations and co-operation with Guatemala in specific activities of trade and economic development, movement of people, foreign representation and defence--all limiting our freedom of action as a sovereign state . . . . Real independence status assumes that the country has the right to determine its political, economic, defence,



external, etc. arrangements. The document predetermines the choice for us in many of these fields.<sup>161</sup>

The United States' designed Webster Plan clearly showed the people of Belize that the U. S. sided with Guatemala in its territorial claim. This as much as anything provided impetus for the Belizean Government to internationalize the Belize issue through the use of international forums. For the remainder of the 1960s and throughout much of the 1970s, the Belize issue was for the most part a non-issue for the United States. The Belize-Guatemalan territorial dispute gained virtually no attention from the U. S. Government and relations with Belize itself were generally limited to trade and minor assistance programs.

United States' aid to Belize during this period was primarily limited to indirect aid from U. S. funded Caribbean assistance organizations and special work projects of the U. S. Peace Corps.<sup>162</sup> Various locations in the United States did serve as neutral meeting grounds for periodic negotiations among Belize, Britain and Guatemala, but, the U. S. did not become directly involved.

The United States abstained consistently in the United Nations' votes on Belize's independence during the 1970s. It was accused of standing "aloof" during the ever increasing rise of international support for Belizean independence.<sup>163</sup> A minor breakthrough appeared to have occurred in July of 1978, when U. S. President Jimmy Carter, in presenting the opening speech of the General Assembly of the



Organization of American States, "pledged his government's willingness to join in the efforts to find a peaceful and just solution to the problem of Belize."<sup>164</sup> President Carter's words were seen as a very significant pledge of support because it was the first time that any U. S. President had ever addressed the Belize issue at an international forum.<sup>165</sup> Unfortunately for Belize, President Carter's pledge of support in 1978 did not translate into votes of support at the United Nations during that year.

The United States continued to abstain from Belize votes at the U. N. in 1978 and in 1979, although by then, it remained one of only a handful of countries that had not committed themselves to support Belizean independence. The voting opposition had been entirely eliminated.

Several different explanations have been suggested as to why the United States maintained its noncommittal position for so long. The one offered as official explanation was that the U. S. hoped its abstention would encourage a negotiated settlement of the unresolved territorial dispute.<sup>166</sup> Others have suggested that U. S. ties and loyalties to Guatemala prevented the U. S. from taking any steps which might further antagonize its once faithful Central American ally. Guatemala had already become alienated from the U. S. due to the human rights policies of the Carter administration which had singled Guatemala out as one of the world's worst human rights offenders. Still others suggested that although the U. S. was in favor of Belizean independence, it simply was not in favor of independence falling into





the hands of the current Belizean PUP Government. The United States was suspicious of Premier George Price and his cordial relations with Cuba and the socialist governments of Grenada and Jamaica. It was suggested that an independent Belize under the PUP "could become a Cuban foothold in Central America."<sup>167</sup>

Regardless of the United States' previous reluctance to commit itself to support Belizean independence, its support was finally forthcoming at the United Nations' votes of 1980. Speculation of U. S. support had circulated for months prior to the Fourth Committee and General Assembly resolutions, but, it was not confirmed until the actual U. N. votes of November 1980.<sup>168</sup> In supporting the independence resolution, the United States also praised the negotiating efforts of Britain, Guatemala and Belize to resolve their dispute, and urged them to continue their talks.

Their talks did continue, and in early 1981 Guatemala seemed more amenable to British suggestions than it had in years. Perhaps the reality of finally losing United States indirect support as well as that of its Latin American brothers finally jolted Guatemala to recognize the futility of its anachronistic claim. The March 1981 Heads of Agreement brought great optimism that the long diplomatic struggle was finally going to allow Belize to enter into an unthreatened secure independence. The United States shared in this optimism and amidst its highpoint, a substantial aid agreement was signed between Premier Price and Mr. William Wheeler, the head of the U. S. Agency for International



Development (AID).<sup>169</sup> Previous U. S. aid to Belize had primarily been received through such channels as CARICOM.<sup>170</sup>

Unfortunatley, Guatemala's cooperative spirit changed abruptly in July 1981, when the negotiations ended at a standstill. This did not prevent Belize from celebrating its September independence. The Honorable Daniel Mica, a member of the House of Representatives and the Honorable Thomas Enders, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, were the ranking members of a fifteen person delegation. Although United States' support was slow in materializing, the U. S. certainly made up for it in its presence at Belmopan. While in Belize, Mr. Enders also indicated that the U. S. had already had talks with the Guatemalan Government about "giving up any idea of taking away the freedom that the citizens of Belize were celebrating so warmly."<sup>171</sup>

Almost two months later, Belize received more official visitors from the United States. Military officers from the U. S. Southern Command in Panama paid a three day visit to discuss military assistance to the Belizean Defense Force.<sup>172</sup> During this same time period, rumors indicated that Prime Minister Price participated in secret talks on the possibility of the United States establishing a military base for U. S. troops to be used for jungle training.<sup>173</sup>

In January of 1982, an agreement was announced that the United States would provide training to the Belizean Defense Force in the U. S. and Panama, and on location in Belize. For the latter, the U. S. was to provide a small



contingent of military advisors to be stationed in Belize.<sup>174</sup> No plans for a military base were included nor have any since been revealed.

Almost one month after the military agreement, President Reagan announced his Caribbean Basin Initiative. This was met favorably in Belize due to its anticipated share of forthcoming aid. Ongoing aid programs from the May 1981 U. S. AID agreement were already assisting greatly. A June 1982 article in the New Belize indicated that these funds were being used to upgrade and improve the electrical distribution system throughout Belize.<sup>175</sup>

While attending the Colombian presidential inauguration in April 1982, Prime Minister Price had the opportunity to meet briefly with Vice-President Bush. They reportedly discussed Belizean affairs.<sup>176</sup> While most events of 1982 seemed to indicate that Belize-United States relations were developing favorably, on two different occasions Prime Minister Price was ostensibly snubbed by President Reagan.

President Reagan spent a working holiday in the Commonwealth Caribbean during the month of April. While in Barbados, he invited the leaders of five of the Commonwealth Caribbean nations to meet him there for talks.<sup>177</sup> Belize was excluded from this group. Similarly, when President Reagan invited the Central American Heads of Government to meet with him in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, following a December tour of Latin America, Belize was once again excluded.<sup>178</sup> This snub followed closely after a November CARICOM meeting in which Jamaica sought to have the left-wing government of



Grenada expelled. Prime Minister Price opposed this action and was successful in stopping it. His actions were not viewed favorably by the United States. Belize had already antagonized the U. S. over Grenada by attending the anniversary celebrations of the Bishop-led Grenada revolution, despite U. S. diplomatic pressure to do otherwise.<sup>179</sup> Additionally, Belize had recently refused to join the U. S. sponsored Central American Democratic Community.<sup>180</sup>

As 1983 began, it became apparent that President Reagan's actions were designed to send a clear signal to Belize about United States' displeasure with its occasional left-wing stance. Belize recognized this and Prime Minister Price seemed to mend his ways somewhat. He obviously recognized the value of U. S. friendship and he seemed to want it maintained. Consequently, Belize's participation in the Sandinista Revolution Anniversary celebrations ended in 1982, and the 1981 Cuban offers of commercial and diplomatic ties were never fully developed.

In January of 1983, the United States upgraded its diplomatic relations with Belize to the ambassadorial level. A defense attache was also assigned to handle the new military relationship. Near the beginning of 1983, a portion of Belize's \$10 million in Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) funds was made available. This initially went into housing programs and balance of payment supports.<sup>181</sup> In addition, another separate aid package of \$4 million for housing projects was received from AID. The year 1983 certainly seemed to be beginning more favorably than 1982 ended,





particularly with regard to presidential relations. In fact, President Reagan sent an invitation in March to Prime Minister Price, inviting him to a White House meeting on 12 May 1983. Mr. Price accepted this invitation for what was to be a historic first for the new nation of Belize.

Prime Minister Price preceded his day at the White House with another day in Washington, D. C. He was honored by the International Center for Entrepreneurs at a luncheon at the Hall of Flags in the United States Chamber of Commerce building. He also delivered an address at Georgetown University. The Reverend Timothy Healy, President of Georgetown University, described Mr. Price as: "A hero of his country, the Father of its Independence and a Prime Minister of a moral and democratic country."<sup>182</sup>

The White House agenda for 12 May included an Oval Office meeting, a Cabinet Room meeting, a working luncheon in the State Dining Room and statements to reporters on the White House lawn. Prior to this, Mr. Price had meetings with officials of the State Department and the Agency for International Development. In their meetings, Mr. Reagan and Mr. Price reportedly discussed the situation in Central America and Belize's relationships with its troubled neighbors. They also discussed trade, economic matters and security issues for Belize.<sup>183</sup> Some sources also indicate that President Reagan suggested moving the U. S. School of the Americas to Belize after it closed in Panama at the end of 1984.<sup>184</sup>

The statements made to the press at the end of the



day's meetings were short in duration, but, both men seemed to indicate that the day had been a success. President Reagan stated:

In contrast to the war and turmoil of the region, Belize--Central America's newest independent democracy--serves as a model of peace and stability . . . . Our discussions have been productive and cordial, and have taken place in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. These conversations have reaffirmed the close relationships between our two nations, the friendships of our people, and our mutual commitment to freedom and human rights.<sup>185</sup>

Prime Minister Price commented:

Our exchange of views served to further the good relations between our two countries. Belize is thankful for the Caribbean Basin Initiative and the helpful cooperation of your people and your Government in our daily task to maintain stability and security which result from mutual respect and recognition of Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity . . . .<sup>186</sup>

Before leaving the United States, Prime Minister Price also visited the headquarters of the World Bank, the headquarters of C.A.R.E., the United Nations and Belizean communities in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles and New Orleans. The city visits were arranged primarily to promote U. S. investment in Belize. To assist this end, the Marketing Service of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) gave a briefing in Houston that commented favorably on the investment climate of Belize.<sup>187</sup>

One month after Mr. Price's visit to the United States, the U. S. reciprocated by sending Ambassador Richard Stone, the special envoy to Central America, for a visit as part of a ten country familiarization tour. While he was in Belize, he noted that Belize was in a strategic position and that the United States was very interested in Belize's well-



being, prosperity and security.<sup>188</sup>

In October 1983, Belize and the United States found themselves once more at odds over Grenada. Belize condemned the invasion of Grenada by the United States and the other participating CARICOM countries. This, however, did not appear to have any deleterious effects on their relationship. In November, the United States approved a two million dollar home loan program and in December, Belize assigned a permanent resident ambassador to the United States. It had previously relied upon a non-resident ambassador.

Mr. Edney C. Cain presented his ambassadorial credentials to President Reagan in ceremonies on the White House lawn. He told President Reagan that Belize was heartened by the support being given by the Government and people of the United States in helping to solve the unfounded territorial claim by Guatemala. President Reagan, in reply, said that the United States valued the cordial relations and spirit of friendship and goodwill that existed between Belize and the United States.<sup>189</sup>

During January of 1984, Belize gained the attention of Washington at least two more times. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Reagan had an opportunity to meet, and, among their discussions was Belize. Mrs. Thatcher had long been intent on pulling the British troops out of Belize and she had indicated that she would do so soon. President Reagan apparently persuaded her to do otherwise.<sup>190</sup>

The Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on



Central America (or the Kissinger Commission Report, as it is more commonly referred) was also released in January 1984. While the report did not discuss Belize in political and military matters, it did include Belize in its economic recommendations. It called for the creation of a Central American Development Corporation (CADC) that would be used to stimulate private investment in the region. The Commission envisioned CADC to include Belize.<sup>191</sup> This idea met very favorable acceptance within Belize and Belizeans have since encouraged its formation.<sup>192</sup>

In March 1984, Belize once again gained U. S. attention when the State Department released its human rights studies. For the year 1983, Belize was given a "clean bill of health--free of any violations."<sup>193</sup> This record was very typical for Belize yet very atypical for the Central American region. This is undoubtedly one of the primary reasons why the Carter White House finally shifted its support to Belize in 1980.

During the remainder of 1984, Belizean-United States relations seemed to be spotlighted on military matters. In April, a U. S. Navy warship visited Belize. The ship's commanding officer was greeted warmly by the Prime Minister and the two exchanged momentos of the ship's visit. Prime Minister Price had previously welcomed and toured other U. S. Navy ships; he toured one during a previous port visit in April 1981 and he toured an aircraft carrier off the coast of Honduras in August 1983.

An announcement of military assistance was also made





in June. The U. S. agreed to provide the Belizean Defense Force with one million dollars worth of military equipment. This included entirely nonlethal gear comprised of such articles as uniforms, tents, backpacks and medical supplies.<sup>194</sup> During this same time, press reports began circulating in the United States, indicating that the U. S. was planning to build a military base in Belize. Belize denied that any such plans existed.<sup>195</sup>

Although Belize did deny that any plans existed, speculation of an increased U. S. military presence in Belize was not entirely unfounded. With the British eager to end their "appropriate period" of involvement, the United States seemed a likely candidate to fill the void, as long as the Guatemalan threat persisted.

The U. S. and Belizean positions have been to keep the British troops in Belize. In a press interview, Malcolm Barnebey, the U. S. Ambassador to Belize, was asked whether or not he thought U. S. forces would ever move in if the British forces pulled out. The Ambassador responded: "Our position is we want the British to stay. We haven't decided what we would do if they left."<sup>196</sup>

As to the Belizean position on the United States replacing Britain, George Price and Belize's new Prime Minister, Manuel Esquivel have both maintained that a U. S. troop presence was not desired.<sup>197</sup> Others feel that a majority of Belizeans would welcome a U. S. troop presence.<sup>198</sup> Regardless of desire, it would seem that if Britain ever did withdraw its troops in the face of a continuing Guatemalan



threat, and if the United States was willing to replace the British, that the Belizean Government would have very little choice except to accept a U. S. military presence.

It would seem, however, that a U. S. presence such as a relocated School of the Americas, would have the same sort of deterrent effect on Guatemala as an actual defensive garrison. It has already appeared as though United States' interest in Belize has calmed Guatemalan hostilities.<sup>199</sup> With the exception of a few small border incidents, the Guatemalan-Belize border has remained peaceful. Guatemalan military movements like those of the 1970s which seemed to be preparations for invasions have not occurred since the U. S. first began making overtures of support to Belize in 1979.

Whether or not the United States ever does become more involved militarily in Belize, it will undoubtedly continue to become more involved in all other spheres. The U. S. Drug Enforcement Agency recently established an office in Belize in order to help Belize interdict drug trafficking between Belize and the United States.<sup>200</sup> The Voice of America also announced in December 1984 that it would build a radio station in Belize in order to provide Spanish language broadcast throughout Central America.<sup>201</sup>

Economically, Belize is vastly dependent on the United States. In 1980, even before an expanded trade relationship, the United States consumed eighty percent of Belize's exports.<sup>202</sup> Belize has also become reliant upon the U. S. aid programs of the Peace Corps and the Agency



for International Development. The Peace Corps program currently consist of eighty volunteers and the AID programs have become so numerous that an AID mission was established in Belize in January of 1983.<sup>203</sup>

Belize-United States relations have indeed developed substantially since the onset of Belizean independence. Nowhere is this more evident than in the activity around the U. S. Embassy in Belize City. The staff has multiplied exponentially in a short span of four years. The motor pool alone consist of sixty-three vehicles.<sup>204</sup> Plans are also underway for an entirely new embassy compound in the capital city of Belmopan. Belize-United States relations have indeed become substantial. In assessing Belize's future, the extent of this relationship cannot be ignored.



## CHAPTER V

### BELIZE: 1984 AND BEYOND

#### 1984 Elections

On 14 December 1984, a new chapter began in Belize's history. George Price and his PUP faced electoral defeat and in turn lost control of the Government for the very first time. The reigns of power were handed to the victorious Manuel Esquivel and his conservative United Democratic Party (UDP).

The December elections were the first for an independent Belize, and although they were scheduled, their date was only established six weeks before the balloting. The 1984 elections included an additional ten seats in the House of Representatives for a total of twenty-eight elected representatives. This increase necessitated a complete redistricting of the constituencies. The short political campaign focused predominately on economic issues, as opposed to the independence issue that had dominated all previous Belizean national elections. The campaign was also characterized by active mudslinging which had "long been a staple of Belizean politics."<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister Price was personally accused of mismanaging the country's economy, abusing his political power and being "too friendly to socialist governments in Nicaragua and Cuba."<sup>2</sup> He was also called a





traitor, Communist, racist, homosexual, and gangster.<sup>3</sup>

The election outcome resulted in the UDP acquiring twenty-one seats and the PUP seven seats. It was an overwhelming and largely unexpected victory. In his own district, George Price was defeated by a vote of 876-570. He lost to a twenty-five year old political newcomer named Derek Aikman.<sup>4</sup> The country's voters clearly seemed to feel that since the PUP had achieved its primary objective of independence, that it was time for a change. They were simply tired of George Price. Consequently, the election was less a victory for the UDP than it was a defeat for the PUP--votes for the UDP were less votes of support than they were votes in opposition to the PUP.

A political analysis of the 1984 election identifies four primary reasons for the PUP's loss of support. First and foremost is the fact that the PUP lost its cause. After the attainment of independence, the PUP simply did not have a raison d'etre. Secondly, the factions within the PUP split over party policies. The leader of the conservative faction within the PUP resigned from the party in early 1984 and in so doing claimed that the party was influenced by an international communist conspiracy. A third reason for the PUP's defeat was the expansion of the House of Representatives and the consequent redistricting of constituencies. When the new districts were created by the Government, it seemed they were proportioned with the obvious intent of providing an advantage to the PUP. In effect, the new districts weakened PUP strongholds. The fourth and final



issue which contributed to the PUP's defeat had to do with the economy. This had been the focus of the UDP's campaign because the Belizean economy under the PUP Government had floundered. It had relied too heavily on the single crop of sugarcane for export earnings as well as borrowing heavily on the international market to support the economy. The UDP favored a more diverse agricultural economy, including attracting foreign investments and developing tourism. Although, the PUP had not been opposed to these things, it simply had not created the necessary incentives to attract investors. For whatever the reasons that the PUP may have lost the election, the fact remains that the UDP now controls the Government in Belize.<sup>5</sup>

The new Prime Minister, Manuel Esquivel, is relatively new to politics. He helped to form the UDP in 1973, served as its party chairman from 1976-1982, and assumed the party leadership in January 1983.<sup>6</sup> In a very short time he arose from obscurity as a college physics professor to the pinnacle of political power as his nation's Prime Minister. Although the UDP was expected to reflect a different political attitude and philosophy for Belize, no major changes were anticipated with its victory. It remains to be seen as to what will happen. The new Government, at this point, is still establishing itself and any significant changes are yet forthcoming.

### Conclusion

Regardless of any changes that Prime Minister Esquivel



may make, he cannot erase the record of international success that Belize enjoyed under the leadership of George Price. The PUP Government embarked upon a foreign policy in the early 1960s that set out to gain the support of the international community for the Belizean cause of self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Support for these rights in turn evoked support for Belize's independence and opposition to Guatemala's territorial claim. Although, the diplomatic initiative required perseverance and patience, it paid off handsomely in 1980 at the United Nations when Belize received the vote of support it needed to carry it to independence.

This remarkable record of success, which brought an obscure British colony to international attention and transformed it into a new international actor, is explained by two dominant factors. One of these is the issue of independence and the other is the long term tenure of the PUP Government.

The Belize issue of independence, or rather decolonization, was a popular issue that most countries could easily support. It was also one of the primary concerns of the United Nations. Much of the United Nation's work since its creation has been initiated in the Fourth Committee. In Belize's case, decolonization was complicated by the existence of the Guatemalan threat, but, it was this threat that forced Belize to seek a wider appeal for its cause. In so doing, Belize gained virtually universal support for its independence and territorial integrity while Guatemala faced



ever increasing ostracism.

It was the long term tenure of the PUP Government that allowed the issue of independence to remain paramount in Belize's foreign policy focus. The PUP was a one issue party. The quest for independence, with its resultant rights to self-determination, sovereignty and territorial integrity, was central to virtually all aspects of PUP governmental activity. In contrast, independence was not the central issue of the leading opposition parties. Had the PUP ever lost an election prior to the attainment of independence in 1981, Belize would probably still remain a British colony. There was in fact some concern voiced when the UDP won the 1984 election that it would seek to reverse Belize's independence; the now ruling UDP is after all the same party that so adamantly opposed the Heads of Agreement in March 1981 and boycotted the Independence Day ceremonies of September 1981. Now that the UDP is the Government, it does not desire to reverse Belize's independence, but, the point is, the PUP's longevity in office provided continuity of purpose towards the maintenance of the internationally popular issue of decolonization. A different Government might not have done so.

Within the PUP itself, the continuity of its leadership also offered further assistance towards the maintenance of the Belize issue. Carl Rogers and George Price became very familiar figures at the various international forums they attended in order to present Belize's case to the world. They gained not only respect and admiration for





their cause, but also lasting friendships which further cemented the support that Belize accrued.

An additional aspect of the PUP's success from its longevity in office relates to its political philosophy. Although the PUP itself worked willingly within a democratic parliamentary system of government, it did not shy away from developing close contacts with countries of other political persuasions. Belize was willing to do this because all it really desired from these countries was their support of the Belizean cause. The PUP Government itself contained members of both right-wing and left-wing factions, but overall it tried to maintain a middle-of-the-road policy. This open-minded acceptance of diverse political systems in other countries served the PUP Government well because it was able to marshall support from almost all countries. Belize's ability to gain the unanimous support from the diverse group of nations that comprise the member states of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Commonwealth of Nations serves as a prime example of this.

Although Belize no longer needed support for independence after 21 September 1981, it still nurtured the relationships it had developed. This nurturing seemed twofold; it continued to provide support for Belize's continuing struggle to insure its territorial integrity in the face of a persistent Guatemalan threat and it provided friendships with countries and organizations that were increasingly willing to offer development assistance to Belize. A recent assessment of the PUP Government's foreign policy objectives



in the October 1984 New Belize, indicated that Belize's foreign policy continued "to seek a solution to the Guatemalan problem, more economic development and the preservation of . . . independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>7</sup> Although the new UDP Government is not expected to make any fundamental changes in this type of foreign policy, a review of likely prospects for change seems in order.

Even before the victory of the UDP, the prospects for Belize's future seemed to include a growing relationship with the United States--what some referred to as a "new colonialism" and a "new dependence."<sup>8</sup> Clearly, United States' assistance and influence was increasing in Belize under the PUP. It is expected to increase even more under the UDP. Prime Minister Esquivel has stated that Belize wants "to establish the best of relations with the United States of America."<sup>9</sup> He has also stated, however, that he hopes the Belize-United States relationship to be primarily an economic one. During a press briefing after his election he stated: "Our relations with the United States will depend heavily on the possibility of getting . . . investment input into Belize . . . ."<sup>10</sup> Toward this end, Prime Minister Esquivel recently visited New Orleans, Louisiana on 24 March 1985, where he met with businessmen interested in investing in Belize.<sup>11</sup> Whereas the PUP had also courted U. S. investment, the UDP seems much more receptive to large multinational corporations and foreign investment in developing Belizean potential for tourism.



The principle issue of concern in future Belize-United States relations, seems to be the prospect for an increasing U. S. military presence. Regarding this, Prime Minister Esquivel stated:

Our policy with regards to the United States and Belize's security needs is a very simple one. We do not believe, assuming a British withdrawal, that Belize would require an American military presence in order to secure our borders from a Guatemalan threat. The United States of America is near enough to Belize. It is obviously powerful enough, that all we would seek, if we could have our wish, would be for the United States to declare that it would not permit a Guatemalan invasion of Belize.<sup>12</sup>

With regards to Belize's future foreign policy, it is expected to be much more closely allied with the United States. Whereas the PUP Government was not hesitant to condemn U. S. actions in Grenada or to offer verbal support to such groups as the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the UDP Government is much more likely to reflect views in consonance with the United States. Belize's new Foreign Minister Dean Barrow has already indicated that Belize's foreign policy is "definitely pro-West."<sup>13</sup> He has also indicated, however, that Belize would not abandon its membership in the Non-Aligned Movement. Regarding this maintenance of a relationship which the UDP previously criticized, Mr. Barrow stated:

Belize's peculiar position in view of the Guatemalan threat . . . obliges us to maintain contact with governments whose political and ideological colouration we might not all together endorse.<sup>14</sup>

The UDP Government has already found itself sending a delegation to the inauguration of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega. In defending this action, Foreign Minister Barrow



indicated that the Government's first responsibility in foreign affairs was the maintenance of Belize's sovereignty and territorial integrity and in that Nicaragua had been a firm supporter of Belize's rights to these principles, the continuance of a Belizean-Nicaraguan relationship was justified, despite past UDP objections. The UDP has clearly realized the realities and constraints of a party in office versus a party in opposition.

The UDP's policies towards resolving the Guatemalan situation are not likely to be any different than the PUP. The UDP has expressed its willingness to negotiate and in fact, it has indicated that it is amenable to considering the provisions of the 1981 Heads of Agreement--which it had previously so adamantly opposed--as the basis for further negotiations.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, regardless of any Belizean Governments' willingness to negotiate, it seems unlikely that any Guatemalan Government will ever seriously negotiate a final settlement. Within Guatemala, the Belize issue has served as a scapegoat to distract its people from internal problems.<sup>16</sup> The issue is one that rallies nationalistic sentiments; it has for years and it is likely to do so in the future. The recent change to a hard line position by the Guatemalan representative at the February 1985 negotiations seems a perfect example. Fortunately, the unlikelihood of there ever being a negotiated settlement is accompanied by the unlikelihood of Guatemala ever using military action to recoup Belizean territory, especially





if Belize maintains a British military presence.

With regards to Belize's relationship with the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Esquivel has made it clear that he wants to strengthen the commitment of the British to maintain their forces in Belize. He has stated:

Paradoxical though it may seem, the independent Belize welcomes the presence of British troops on our soil. Indeed, we seek to strengthen a British commitment for them to remain in Belize.<sup>17</sup>

To this end, he sent Foreign Minister Barrow to London; however, the British were unwilling to commit themselves to anything more specific than the "appropriate period" of involvement that presently defines their commitment.<sup>18</sup>

Overall, Belize faces an optimistic future. Although the economy does suffer from malaise and it does need desperate help, the potential for recovery exist. Although the Guatemalan territorial claim and military threat persist, Belize has used it to its advantage. The threat continues to provide Belize with British assistance which benefits Belize's economy both directly and indirectly. Additionally, the threat serves as an exploitable issue which Belize can use to retain international support. The PUP Government did this successfully through 1984. Whether or not the UDP continues this practice remains to be seen, but regardless, no one can deny that during the 1970s and early 1980s, the tiny nation of Belize was indeed a very active participant in the international community. When Aldous Huxley derogatorily referred to British Honduras as one of the ends of the world, little did he know that the new



nation of Belize would arise and truly become an international actor.



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## BIOGRAPHY

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